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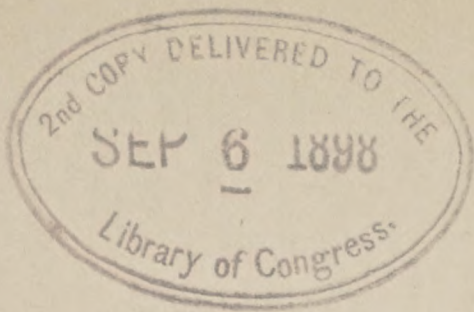
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A·PUZZLING·PAIR



BY AMY LE FEUVRE
AUTHOR OF "PROBABLE SONS"



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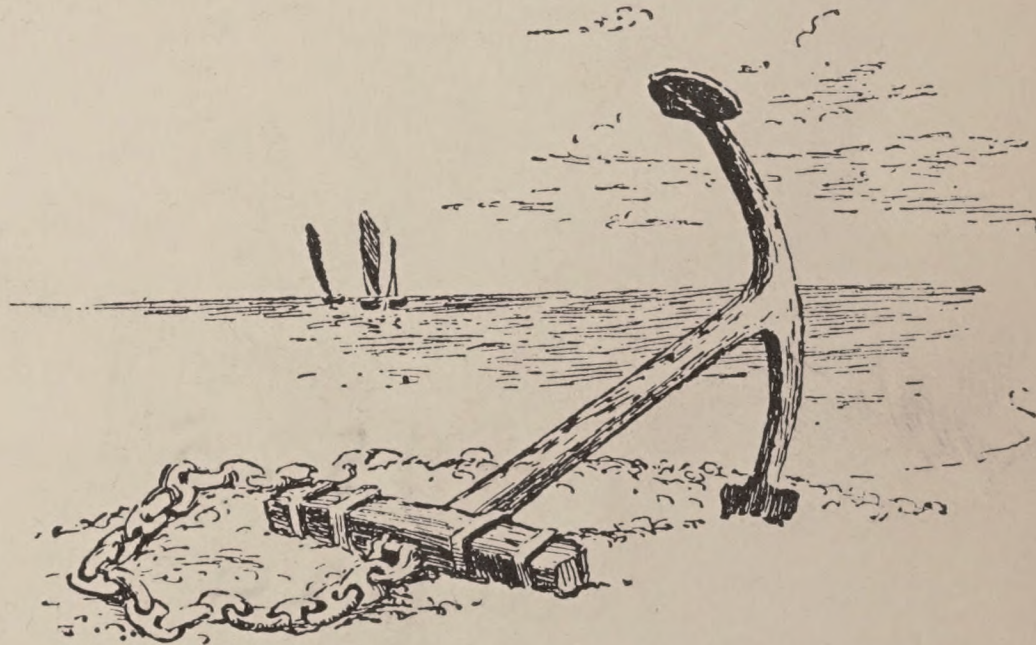
Author of

"Probable Sons" "Teddy's Button" "The Odd One" etc



"Therefore be ye also ready: for in
such an hour as ye think not,
the Son of Man cometh."

Illustrated by
Eveline Lance



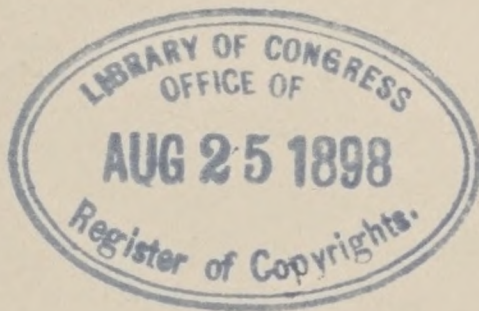
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Chapter I

THE OLD MANOR HOUSE

THEY were lying flat on an old tiger skin before a blazing fire. The large, desolate-looking room had an eerie appearance in the waning light; bare brown branches tapped at the curtainless windows; and the wind howled and whistled down the wide chimney; yet the children in the firelight were too absorbed in their occupation to notice their surroundings.

Guy, a dark-eyed, resolute looking little fellow, with puckered brow and pursed-up lips, was engaged—pencil in hand—in depicting various scenes which his sister's active imagination was conjuring out of the fire.

His sketch book was composed of all sorts and sizes of paper stitched together, and the pencil required a great deal of moisture from the young artist's lips to leave any trace at all on the soiled and crumpled material supplied for its use.

Beryl's tiny head was supported by two plump little hands, and she was gazing eagerly into the glowing coals in front of her.

"Quick, Guy! Make a charger dashing through a cave of fire; and a man pulling a woman across a precipice; and now

A Puzzling Pair

here's a bear coming down a hill ! and a donkey's head coming through a hole in the cave ! ”

“ Don't go so fast, Berry,” remonstrated the boy.

Beryl beat a tattoo on the floor impatiently with her toes.

“ Father will be coming in directly, and then we shall be sent away, and the kitchen fire is not half as good as this one for making pictures.”

“ If you keep quiet father won't know we are **here**.”

“ Hark ! here he comes ! ”

The door was hastily opened, and two men in shooting costume entered.

“ Come along, Alf ! We shall feel better after some food. A couple of hares and six brace of birds isn't a bad bag from my barren preserves.”

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man who spoke : a man still in the prime of life, but his movements were slow and heavy in comparison with the alert briskness of his companion, and his face wore a dreamy, pre-occupied air. As he sauntered up to the fire, he saw the children lying there.

“ Halloo, chicks, what are you doing ? Where is Matty ? Guy, go and tell her we want some dinner quick ! ”

The boy darted off, hastily stuffing papers and pencil into his pocket, and Beryl followed him.

A few minutes later, an elderly woman came in. As she was laying the cloth on the round table in the centre of the room, her master spoke :

“ Matty, what have you got for us ? We are dead beat, and very hungry.”

“ Rabbit stew, sir,” Matty replied, raising a bright face to the questioner.

“ Your stews are excellent, but I shall not want many more of them. Do you know that Mr. Ford has been tempting me up to the city again ? I am going to return with him in two days time, so I shall leave the house in your charge. I may be away a couple of months.”



The Old Manor House

“And the children, sir?”

“Oh, the children remain here with you, of course.”

Matty looked troubled and dissatisfied. But she said no more, and when the hot dishes were placed on the table she withdrew to the kitchen.

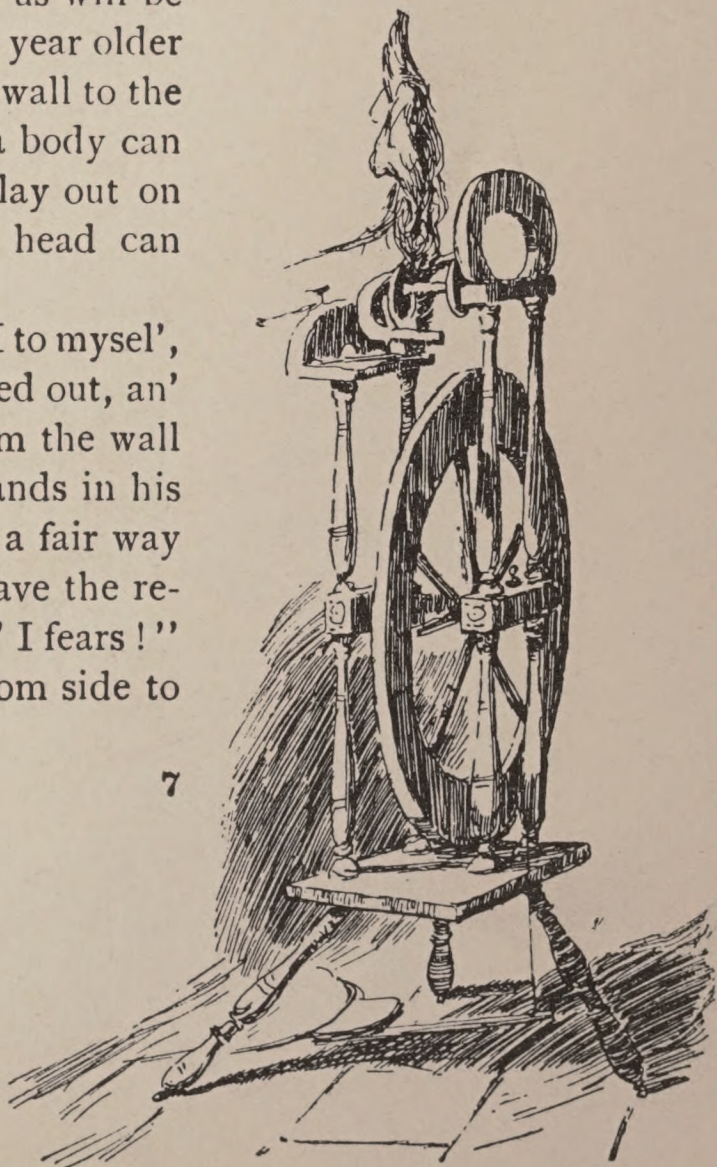
The manor kitchen was the most cheerful room in the old house. Always spotlessly clean, the red tiled floor and the cheery blaze in the old-fashioned hearth did much to contribute toward the comfort of its inmates. All the crockery of which the house could boast was arranged in shining rows along the old oak dresser, from the beautiful remnants of an old Sèvres china tea set, to the coarse yellow delf that was in daily use in the kitchen. The only two articles in the room that looked more for adornment than use were an antique carved spinning-wheel in one corner, and a glass aquarium case of sea anemones in a forest of seaweed, rock, and coral that stood in the window.

The children were standing close to this case, talking eagerly to an old man, as Matty entered.

“Well, Tummas, the master is off agen! An’ us will be in a worse plight than ever this winter, for all be a year older since last he went, from the foundations o’ the sea wall to the shoes and stockin’s of the children! An’ how a body can bring ’em up respectibble with ne’er a penny to lay out on eddication, or garments, be more than my poor head can puzzle out!”

“Ay, the master telled I this mornin’, an’ thinks I to mysel’, maybe he’ll come back one day an’ find us all starved out, an’ the old house in ruins! I did make free to tell him the wall must be repaired right soon, an’ he claps his hands in his pockets, an’ says he: ‘Ah, well, Tummas, I’m in a fair way now to make money, an’ I’ll send ye a check to have the repairs put in hand at once!’ A very long ‘at once,’ I fears!”

And the old man shook his head doubtfully from side to side as he spoke.



A Puzzling Pair

But for once the faithful old servants were mistaken in their master, and could they but have listened to the conversation going on in the old dining-room, their hearts would have been lightened and cheered.

"Your visit has been a godsend to me, Alf," Mr. Forrester was saying. "I have been trying to shake off my sloth for the past couple of years, as you see by my contributions toward your paper; but literary spurts will not keep my household going. And pride alone forbade me to close with Lord Warren's proposal. I am glad I have overcome it. As his agent I shall have a sure income, and if I can get taken on to the staff of the *C—— Review*, I may be able to start repairing this old place."

"It wants it," was the terse comment.

"Of course it does; but once begin, and where is one to stop? Old Thomas tells me the sea-wall is at last giving way, and that, of course, must be put in hand at once. Come out and look at the buildings presently, and tell me, not how much, but how little I can do, to prevent the whole place coming down about our ears one stormy night!"

"Why on earth do you stay here?"

"Because I have an affection for every stone in the place. I was born and brought up in it; it was the only thing that brought me home from the wilds of California after my father's death. And it is my own, and it is unencumbered by mortgage or debt."

"And it has sapped every bit of energy and spirits out of your system," put in Alf Ford briskly. "Why, man alive, I feel this soft Devon air and lonely isolation would send me to sleep if I settled here for a month or two, and you have buried yourself here for eight years!"

A little later and the speakers rambled out on the old terraced garden in front of the house, and Mr. Forrester again took a survey of his home.

An old manor house by the sea; grey and weather-beaten



The Old Manor House

by time and storm, yet still showing a brave front ; and ivy kindly covering over many a ragged crevice in the stout walls. The garden was rich in shrubberies and trees ; cedars and elms were grouped about on the long stretch of mossy lawn, which sloped away down to a stone terrace overlooking the ocean. A broad flight of stone steps led down to the beach, but the moss and stone-crop were thickly spread over them ; and though the view by moonlight was picturesque enough to satisfy any artistic soul, both men knew that house and grounds would bear a very different aspect in the broad light of day.

They came back to the dining-room, and here again they fell to criticising their surroundings. It was bare enough to invite criticism ; the boards were not even carpeted ; a few skins lay here and there—relics of a Californian past ; an oak sideboard and an old oak press formed the only furniture beside the table and chairs, and the latter were in the very last stage of shabbiness and decay. Newspapers, riding boots, guns and fishing-rods lay scattered promiscuously over the room, and as the owner looked he sighed.

“I’ve had strange thoughts lately,” he said, standing on the hearth-rug and looking intently into the face of his friend, who had now subsided into one of the ragged leather chairs by the fireside ; “I have wondered whether, as I am going to reform, I had not better have a woman to help me.”

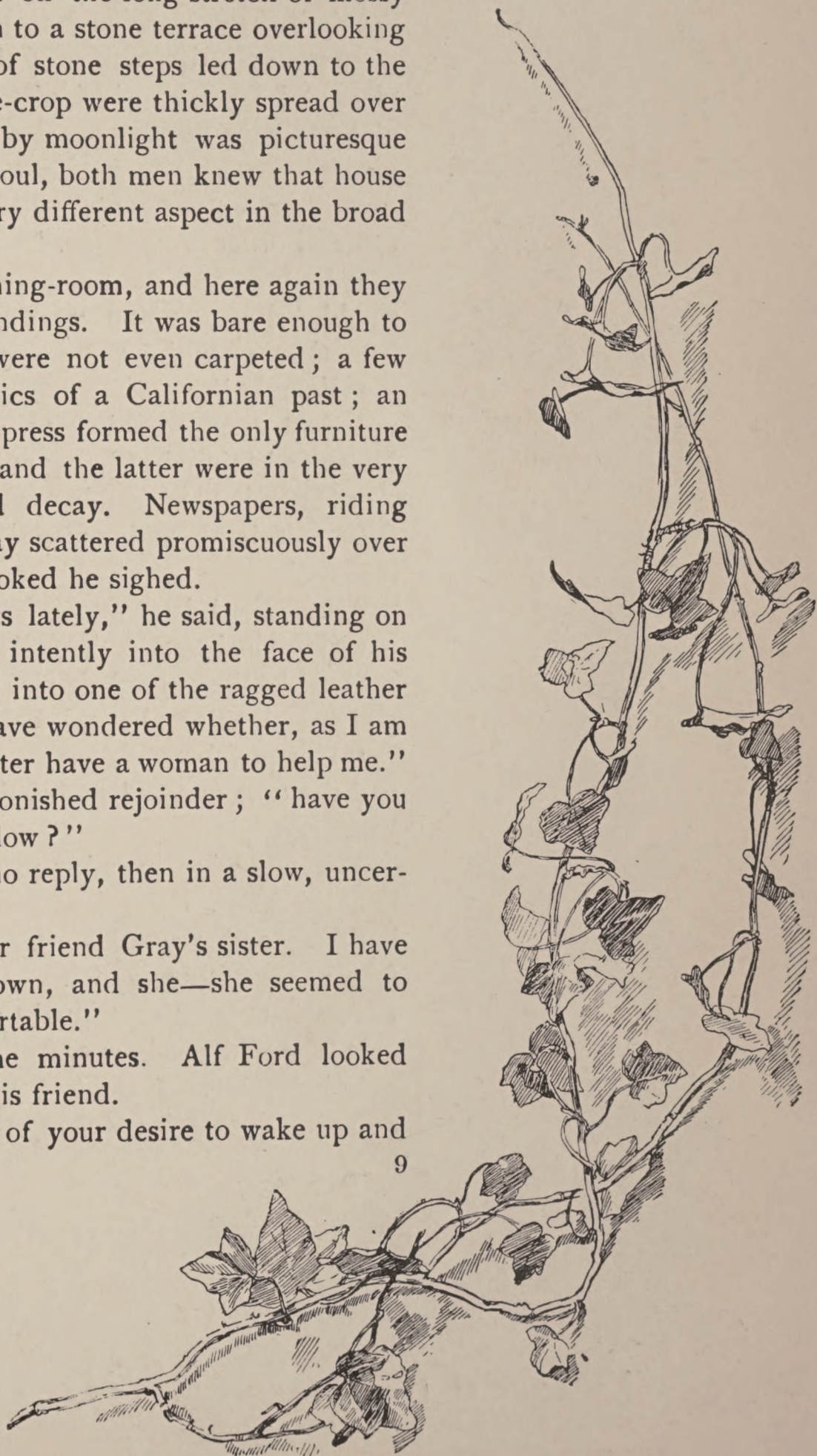
“A woman !” was the astonished rejoinder ; “have you any one in your mind, old fellow ?”

For a moment there was no reply, then in a slow, uncertain tone,—

“Why—yes, I have. Your friend Gray’s sister. I have stayed with them when in town, and she—she seemed to know how to make him comfortable.”

There was silence for some minutes. Alf Ford looked round the room and then at his friend.

“And is this at the bottom of your desire to wake up and



A Puzzling Pair

join the rest of us poor mortals in earning an honest livelihood?"

"No; I have been getting tired of my life here; of hearing perpetual complaints from my old servants of the children's shortcomings and turbulent spirits; and of the discomfort and dreariness of the place. I am not hard to please—I have knocked about in too many quarters of the globe to have fastidious tastes—but I own I have a wish to go my own way, write as hard as I like, live in as many day-dreams as I choose, and when I wake up, find cheerful comfort and order around me."

"In fact, you want a capable, cheery housekeeper, who would bring you and your belongings into ship-shape, and keep them so without allowing you to feel the process?"

"Exactly."

"And how would your old retainers take it? Would Matty feel injured at being so supplanted?"

"Matty is too sensible a woman to object. If she has one failing, it is an undue affection for her master, and his wish is hers."

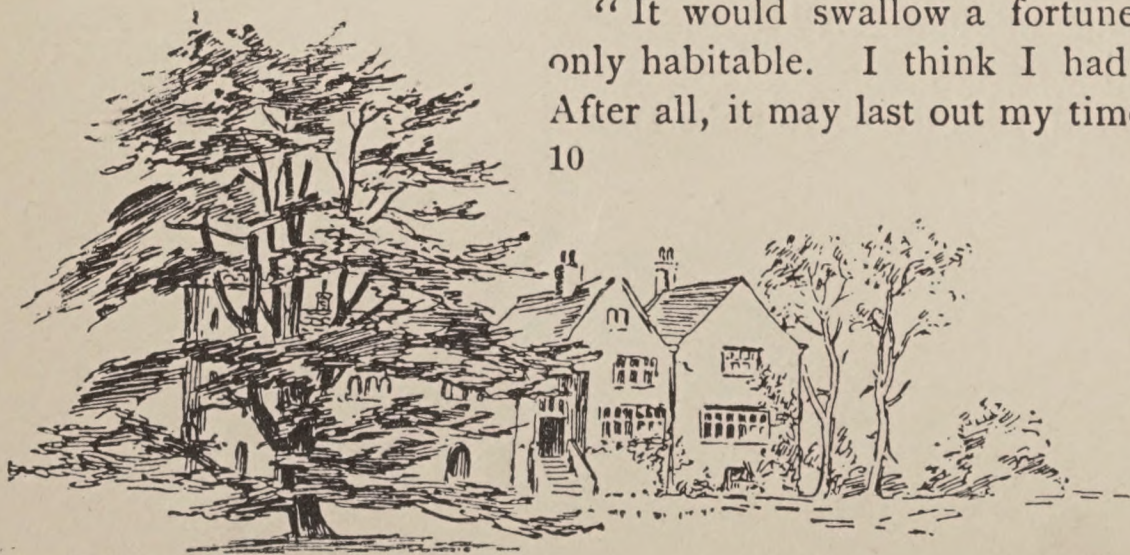
Alfred Ford drew a long breath.

"Good luck to you, then!" he said; "only, my dear fellow, I should let the young lady clearly understand what her position will be. Don't let her think there is any love in the compact."

"Her position will be that of my wife," was the rejoinder; and the tone was so haughty that no more was said on the subject.

The following morning rose bright and clear, and, after a late breakfast, the gentlemen walked round, inspecting the building and grounds. Dilapidations stared them in the face at every turn, and it was with a dejected mien that Mr. Forrester at length returned to the house.

"It would swallow a fortune," he said, "and then be only habitable. I think I had better let sleeping dogs lie. After all, it may last out my time."



The Old Manor House

“And what about your son?”

The son and heir alluded to now suddenly appeared, and close behind him his sister.

“Father, are you going to the city?”

The question was breathlessly put, and as his father, placing his hand on his shoulder, held him at arm's length to inspect, he added,—

“Matty says you are. Can I be master when you are away?”

The little face, with the dark, curly hair and soft, dreamy, brown eyes and the resolute little mouth and chin, was now full of determined resolve.

Instead of answering his question, the father turned to his friend.

“Are you good at reading faces, Alf? Don't you see in this youngster's countenance that he has more grip and energy of purpose in every fibre of his body than his father has, or ever will have in the whole course of his life? I think I can prophesy he will be in no need of a ruined heritage to shield him from want in hours of ease! ‘Master,’ Guy? I think you know how to be master of every situation in which you find yourself! It is an idle question to ask of me.”

“I only want you to say so, father, because of Berry. She says she shall be mistress. I say she sha'n't!”

The little maiden thrust herself forward: the same height and build as her twin brother, and yet no two faces could present a greater contrast. Her father often said of her, “She seems to see a perpetual secret joke in all that is being said and done!”

Her little face was sunshine itself; her sparkling eyes, the corners of her tiny mouth, the dimples in her cheeks were all twinkling with suppressed fun and mischief. If Matty or Thomas scolded, their frowns would relax when they met the mirthful gaze of the child. Nothing daunted her; life was at present one long vista of sunshine and gladness; and if obstacles came



A Puzzling Pair



in the way, and clouds rolled across her small horizon, what were obstacles or clouds but fresh opportunities for exercising ingenuity and mischief combined in overcoming and circumventing them? Guy's earnestness of purpose and determined will often clashed with the quicksilver little maiden's moods; they fought and made peace, and fought again, and yet through it all loved each other with a heart-deep sincerity.

"Matty is not going to be mistress when you're away, father. I've told her she isn't. And Guy and me will have our breakfast and dinner and tea in the big dining-room by ourselves—we're tired of the kitchen, and I shall teach Guy how to behave and *I* shall be mistress!"

"You sha'n't be mistress over me," asserted the boy. "If there's a master in the house, no mistress is wanted."

"Not so fast, my boy! I think differently, and perhaps you will think differently too in a few months' time."

Then noting the puzzled gaze of his little son, Mr. Forrester turned away and continued his conversation with his friend. The children felt they were dismissed, but the important question had not been settled; and, tiring of the argument, they bent their steps to the stables, and coaxed out their beautiful little Welsh pony.

Ten minutes after, and two little figures—one behind the other—were tearing along the breezy meadow outside the manor grounds on horseback. The two always rode together, Guy in front and his sister close behind him. Sometimes by dint of much coaxing she was allowed to ride in the post of honor, and have the reins in her tiny hand, but as a rule her place was in the rear and her hold was Guy's leather belt. They had not gone far, before they met two clergymen both on stout rough ponies, and the elder one of them pulled up for a moment.

"Hi! you gipsies!" he shouted, good-naturedly; "where are you going this morning?"

The Old Manor House

Guy drew up instantly, and Berry put her curly head over his shoulder.

"Will you race us, Mr. Thorpe? You're always saying you will!"

"When I take a holiday I will," laughed the vicar. "Is your father in this morning? I want to introduce my curate to him, for I shall leave him in charge when I go away shortly."

"What's a curate?" demanded Guy, with knitted brows, as he surveyed the young stranger with some curiosity.

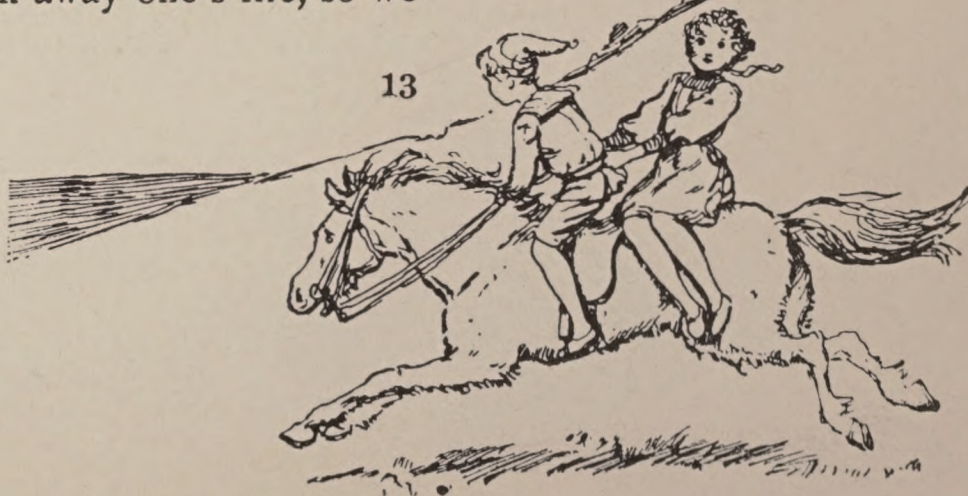
"Father is going to London," put in Berry, eagerly; "and I'm going to be mistress when he's away."

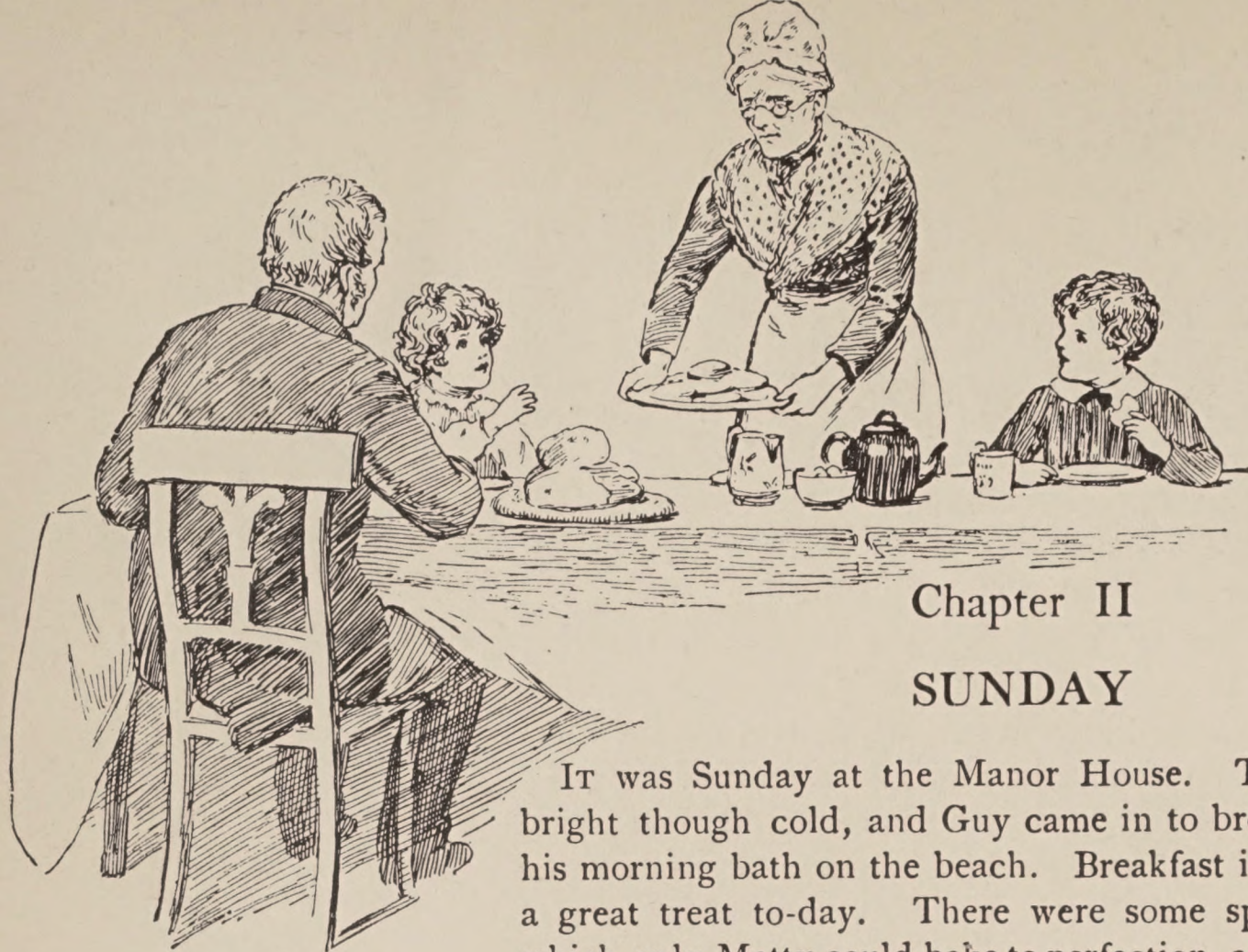
Guy gave a backward kick at her, which had not the effect he desired, for instead of silencing her it startled the pony into a mad gallop, and turning her saucy little face round Berry called out, "Good-bye, Mr. Thorpe; we sha'n't like Mr. Curate like you—he looks afraid he'll fall off his horse!"

"Who are they?" asked the young man—the Rev. Arthur Grant by name, "they have not much reverence for the cloth!"

And he turned to watch them careering over the meadow as he spoke.

"No," said his vicar, laughing; "but we understand each other. They come over to clean out my rabbit hutches very often, and I hear them bits of the catechism before they go. They are sad little heathen in the way of education and manners; but their father's old housekeeper who looks after them gives them a good, though rather an unorthodox, religious training, and teaches them to speak the truth. I believe that is a rare virtue amongst children. Their father is just one of those delightful, easy-going, pleasant-tempered fellows, who thinks he has a literary vocation, and writes articles and stories for various periodicals without ever bringing much grist to the mill. You will see the dilapidated state of the house and grounds; but it is a sweet old place—a kind of nook where one could dream away one's life, so we must not blame him."





Chapter II

SUNDAY

It was Sunday at the Manor House. The morning was bright though cold, and Guy came in to breakfast rosy from his morning bath on the beach. Breakfast in the kitchen was a great treat to-day. There were some special hot cakes, which only Matty could bake to perfection, and a new-laid egg for each of the children; Berry's thick curls had had an extra brush, and her little shabby blue serge frock had a clean lace tucker in neck and wrists. Guy wore a jacket and white collar instead of the blue jersey he donned on week days; and though the stockings on each small pair of legs were darned in very ungainly fashion, they were clean and neat, and the shoes were shining with an extra coat of blacking. Matty herself was in her Sunday costume—a grey gown with a violet woolen cross-over, and very stiff starched cap and apron. She wore her "Sunday face"—as the children called it—which meant that her usually smiling countenance was lengthened considerably, and spectacles were on her nose. Thomas was in a suit of black broadcloth, but a vivid red-and-yellow silk handkerchief round his throat relieved the sombreness of his attire.

"Berry and I are going to church this morning," asserted Guy, presently.

"'Tis too far for you," objected Matty. "We go with father when he's home, and now he's away we'll go just the same."

Sunday

“ 'Tis too far for us old folks,” said Thomas, reflectively ;
“ but if they likes to try, why let they I say ! ”

“ But we'll have no Sabbath breaking,” put in Matty.
“ Ye'll not go to the parson's to dinner afterward and miss our service.”

Berry laughed gleefully.

“ If Mr. Thorpe asks us, what shall we say ? And he always has apple-tart on Sunday ! ”

“ I've cooked the sweetest little apple turnovers that ever were seen for dinner to-day,” observed Matty, with guile.

“ Will you spread the dinner in the dining-room, and let Guy and me sit in the big chairs and you and Thomas wait on us ? ”

“ Nay, that us will not do, you naughty child.”

“ But you ought to, because we're master and mistress and you are our servants ! ”

This saucy speech brought a torrent of words from old Thomas. “ 'Tis strange times when babes begin to ride over them that have nurtured 'em from their birth ! Where be the teachin' ye've given to 'em, Matty, if ye haven't a taught 'em to honor and respec' their elders and betters ? I've a seen scores o' childer grow up to be fathers and mothers of fam'lies, and never such a speech have I heard from the lips of any of 'em ! 'Tis written—‘ For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ! ’ An' 'twill be ill to spare the rod o' correction, an' let sich a sperrit take root in the evil heart of a giddy young maid, an' spring up in after life to sow seeds of everlastin' misery in the path she walks, an' bring her haughty head to the ground with shame and confusion ! ”

Berry's eyes grew round as she listened to this speech ; but nothing daunted, she folded her small arms and rested them upon the table. Putting her head on one side, she looked up into Thomas's face with an air of comical gravity,—

“ If you aren't a servant, what are you ? ” she asked. “ You aren't a master, and when father is away I'm the mistress and Guy is the master ; we've settled that.”



A Puzzling Pair



Old Thomas rose and walked to a shelf, from which he took down a large black Bible. Spreading it open on the table, he said sternly, "Now listen to the words of God Almighty who cannot lie! 'Now I say, that the heir as long as he is a child differeth nothing from a servant though he be lord of all.' Do ye take it in? Ye be nothing better than us—the two o' ye, and nothing like so good, for ye be the idlest good-for-nothingest young cretturs that ever my old eyes have seed!"

"Read it again and explain it," said Berry, with a wrinkle between her eyes. The verse was read in stern, unfaltering tones, and then Berry slipped down from her chair and danced up and down in triumph.

"It isn't for me! I'm not an heir. Guy is the son and heir; father always says so. I'm not a he; I'm a she, so you're all wrong about me, Thomas. And I'm the mistress here!"

Then like a flash of light she darted out of the kitchen, leaving Thomas decidedly worsted in the combat. The little couple started soon after for church, Berry hugging a large church service and Guy a hymn book and Bible. Their woolen tam-o'-shanters were not much smarter than their clothes, and their cloth jackets were both patched at the elbows. Happily they were not of the age to be sensitive about their outward appearance, and made their way up the church aisle to their own seat with a little bustle of importance.

Very quiet and reverent were they in their behavior, and very particular about following the service in their prayer-books throughout, though it involved a great deal of turning over leaves and sundry whispered confabulations. But when the hymns were given out their enjoyment was evident. Mounted on two hassocks, they lifted up their voices and sang with a fervor and will that put the rest of the congregation to shame; and though sadly lacking in tune and tone, they certainly were not lacking in sound. It was a village congregation, pure and simple, the service was hearty, and the sermons were generally brief and bright; but this morn-

Sunday

ing the pulpit was occupied by the Rev. Arthur Grant, and his voice rang out with a solemnity and force that had been seldom heard there before.

“Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.”

Berry and Guy had been accustomed to find the text out in their Bibles, and repeat it to their father on the way home from church; but beyond this their attention had never been secured.

This morning it was different; the theme was a novel one; the earnestness and the graphic descriptions of the fiery young preacher held them spellbound, and the simplicity of his style found a ready entrance into their childish minds. After church was over they did not linger, but trotted home in the face of a keen east wind, talking as they went. It was a long walk—nearly two miles. The road stretched away over bleak, bare hills, and the wind brought in its clutches salt spray from the ocean. The children turned up their coat collars, drew their caps well over their foreheads, and pressed steadily on.

“I never knew it might be any day,” said Berry, earnestly. “I wonder if he told the truth!”

“Of course he did! he told us out of the Bible.”

“But nobody is expecting it. Thomas doesn’t!”

After a pause. “Guy, how do you think Jesus will come? Will He have wings?”

“I suppose He can come down without. He didn’t have them to go up to heaven.”

Berry knitted her brows. “I expect the angels flew down and pulled Him up.”

“Why, Berry, Jesus can do anything! He walked on the water, so of course He can walk in the air!”

“Guy, would you be frightened if you saw Him come?”

Guy didn’t answer. Berry went on,—“I’m afraid I should awfully! I think—I think I should run away from Him.”

“That wouldn’t be any good,” said Guy, in mournful tones. “If He would come quite alone, I don’t think I



A Puzzling Pair

would be so frightened ; but it's all the crowds with Him, and they would all stare so ! ” Poor Guy suffered much from shyness, and Berry, who was never more audacious than when with strangers, could not understand his fears.

“ You'll have to get behind me,” she said, “ and I shall stare at them back.”

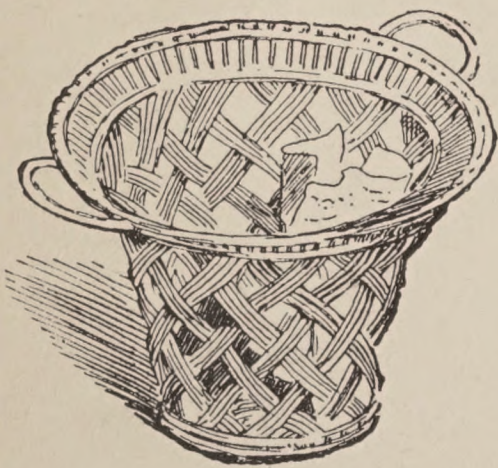
“ You said you would run away a minute ago ! ”

“ Well, I don't know what I'd do. I hope He won't come this week while father is away. Guy, will you make a picture of it ? It must be a very big one. I'll help you this afternoon after the meeting is over.”

Guy's eyes sparkled. “ Yes, I'll do it ; and it will be quite Sunday drawing, won't it ? Even Matty can't say drawing Jesus is wicked ; and I've found a lovely piece of paper in father's wastebasket. It's clean, both sides, and only has writing on one line, which I can cut off.” This idea was very cheering, and they arrived home in the best of spirits.

Dinner over, there was the usual Sunday bustle of tidying the kitchen, and bringing in forms and extra chairs for the meeting. At three o'clock the congregation had arrived, and Guy and Berry were seated on either side of Matty, looking as if restlessness and mischief were unknown to them.

Matty and Thomas were earnest if not very enlightened Christians, and about two years before, Thomas had received permission from his master to hold a little service in the kitchen on Sunday afternoons. His audience had grown from himself and Matty, and an old couple from a lodge of Lord Warren's, to about sixteen or eighteen every Sunday. Local preachers from the neighboring town would sometimes come out ; but this was a rare event, and Thomas, aided by the blacksmith, Dan Cobb, was generally the leader in the meeting. There were many scattered fishers' cottages along the coast, and no church or chapel within easy reach. The Manor House kitchen had attractions of its own, and the service was undoubtedly a popular one.



Sunday

Thomas opened it with a hymn from *Sacred Songs and Solos*, and the children sang as lustily as they had done in church that morning. A long prayer followed, interspersed throughout by "Amens," "Hallelujah," and "Praise the Lord," in which also Guy and Berry heartily joined. Another hymn; a chapter read by Dan Cobb, who always chose one of the longest in the Bible, stumbling slowly and painfully, though entirely to his own satisfaction, through the names he could not master; and then Thomas rose to his feet, and with a stern severity gave out his text,—

"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

It was a searching question, and Thomas in his rough eloquence, and earnest desire to picture to the sinner the awfulness of his fate, perhaps drew more on his imagination than was warranted by Scripture. Tears were in the eyes of some, and often as Guy and Berry had listened to his stern denunciations before, they had never felt so frightened and ill at ease as they did now. When it was over they slipped out of the room, and making their way over the fallen leaves on the old lawn, they ran down the moss-covered steps at the end of the terrace to the beach. The tide was out, and the wind had fallen, the sand stretched away smooth and bare, save where long strands of seaweed and jelly fish relieved the monotony of its surface.

"Let us come into our cave," suggested Berry; and Guy obediently followed her into a small shelter in the cliff, which was their favorite haunt. They sat down in silence on a rocky ledge, and then, after a few minutes, Berry drew a long sigh.

"I'm afraid I shall have to be lost, Guy. I'm not good enough for heaven."

"I don't mean to be lost," said Guy, resolutely. "God doesn't want us to be, and I sha'n't."

"But you won't be able to help it. Thomas says we're 'children of wrath'!"

"We're children of nobody but father," put in Guy, get-



A Puzzling Pair

ting up from his seat and striding up and down in perturbation. "Thomas was speaking to the sinners this afternoon."

"And aren't we sinners? I'm sure Matty is always telling us what sinners we are!" Guy did not answer; he looked at his sister rather thoughtfully. Berry's dimples and smiles had disappeared, her little mouth was pursed up, and knitted brows entirely hid her laughing eyes.

"I've been afraid a long time," she said, "that I might be going to hell, but I feel surer than ever this afternoon."

"Why?"

"Oh, because I'm so wicked. When Thomas was saying giddy, silly children and people were flocking down the hill to 'struction, I was just wanting to tickle his heel. He never put on his boots this afternoon, he had his carpet slippers, and I saw a big hole in his stocking, and I wished old Ginger had been sitting by me, he would have snapped at his heel, because he kept kicking it out so! Wouldn't Thomas have screamed!" And Berry's wrinkles disappeared, and her merry laugh rang out. But Guy did not join her.

"I won't go to hell," he repeated, looking gravely out toward the blue ocean in front of him; "I shall get saved like Joe Tucker was last Sunday. I asked him how he did it, and he said; 'Oh, I felt frightened out o' my wits! I cried for mercy all the night, and God saved me at six o'clock in the morning'!"

"And are you going to cry for mercy all the night? I don't believe you'll keep awake," said Berry, with a sceptical shake of her curly head.

"I don't know. Thomas said God would wash our sins away when we were really sorry. I shall try and make myself cry over my sins, and then I shall be fit to be saved."

"Well," said Berry, "I know I shall never be able to cry like that. Oh, Guy, you've forgotten about your picture. Do make it now!"

Guy brightened up at once; he took his precious piece of



Sunday

paper out of his pocket, spread it on a smooth stone, sharpened his pencil, and set to work immediately, lying full length on the sand, whilst Berry sat down by his side tucking her legs well underneath her, and giving him directions as usual.

No subject was beyond Guy; he never would own that anything was too difficult for him to portray; and if his representations could only be understood by Berry and himself, that was sufficient proof of his talent. No other eye ever fell on his productions.

“Have you made Jesus Christ—a big crown, and no wings, and the sun coming out all round Him, and a beautiful lovely face? Now make Noah with his ark, and Daniel and David with their lions, and Moses and Aaron, and all the good children of Israel who went to heaven when they died, and Joseph and Jacob, and Elijah in his chariot and horses.”

“You’re too fast,” objected Guy; “I sha’n’t have room for all of them.”

“Then you must get a lot more paper and pin it together, because you’ll have a hundred million thousand to draw. You mustn’t miss one out, and you must draw the angels with their harps and wings and—Guy—I think you must put in mother. Make her like the picture in the drawing-room when she’s going out riding. And then when you’ve done them all, you must make you and me standing ready to meet them.”

Guy’s pencil stopped working. “I can’t make us if we aren’t ready; it wouldn’t be true,” he said slowly.

A big bell rang out at this juncture, and the children started to their feet.

“That’s tea, Guy, and there’s a lovely cake to-day, because Matty’s niece is staying to tea!”

Guy followed his sister’s flying steps rather unwillingly. Half-way up the old garden to the house he paused, and taking off his cap, reverently looked up into the sky.

“O God, help me to cry for my sins, for I want to be saved. And I’ve quite made up my mind that I won’t go to hell.”





Chapter III

STARTLING NEWS

ONE morning some weeks later as breakfast was going on in the manor kitchen, the unusual sight of the old postman coming up the drive sent the twins flying out to meet him. They brought back a letter for Matty.

"It's from father; we know it is!" they cried, dancing round the table. "P'raps he is coming home!"

Matty looked at the letter, turned it over twice, then went slowly to her work-box to fetch her spectacles. She was not a quick reader at any time, but this letter seemed to require all her concentration of mind; and after reading it twice through, her hands began to shake, and her head nod up and down, a sure sign that she was greatly excited.

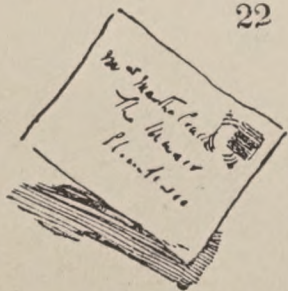
"Tummas!" she cried; "come here, for I be afeered I shall go crazy. Read the master's letter and say if you can rightly understand it. It be more nor I can do!"

Up came Thomas with a great deal of fuss and read out in a faltering voice the following,—

"TO MARTHA CRASH,—

"I hope in about a month's time to bring home a wife. Will you have everything ready for your new mistress? I send £10 for any outlay required, and should like the drawing-room opened and aired.

"WARWICK FORRESTER."



Startling News

The old servants gazed at each other in awed perplexity, the children in eager curiosity.

And then Matty gave a little trembling laugh.

“To think that the master should do so all on a sudden; and what does he think £10 can get toward makin’ the old house fit for a lady’s use! Do she know what she be comin’ to I wonder?”

“Us must have a wiman up from the village to clean,” said Thomas, thoughtfully, “and I will be havin’ another try at mendin’ the front gate; but dearie me, ’tis an awful tale that there letter have broughted.”

“Is a wife a new mother?” asked Guy, quickly.

“Bless the children, it’ll be a wonderful change for ’em! It be a stepmother as is comin’, my dears; there be kind stepmothers, and there be cruel stepmothers, and there be indifferent stepmothers. I doubt me if a London lady will be the best mistress here; but time ’ll show, and old Matty won’t be the one to speak black of her afore she comes!”

There was a tour of inspection through the house after that, and the old couple shook their heads over the dining-room as well they might.

“Ten pounds wouldn’t even buy windy curtains to keep out the wind from all they windies, let alone a carpet and fresh covering for the chairs,” said Matty, mournfully, “and I mind when thick velvet covered our old stone stairs from their top to bottom. ’Tis the barrenest house that ever bride was brought to!”

The drawing-room was unlocked, and revealed faded grandeur: the damask couches were moth-eaten and ragged; the gilded wall paper hung in strips from the damp and mouldy walls; the threadbare carpet and tarnished cornices and chandeliers all added to the picture of desolation and decay.

“We’ll brush it and clean it, and take the dust and dirt away; but ten pounds ’ll do nothing here,” was Matty’s comment, and they proceeded to the library.



A Puzzling Pair

This had a more comfortable aspect, for it was where the master of the house always sat, and the well-filled bookcases, the oil paintings on the walls, and the large writing-table and escritoire did much to give an air of respectability to the room.

"I think this may bide as it be, and now 'tis the morning room we must see to, for it were there the late missus allays used to sit."

Matty unlocked another room on the opposite side of the hall, and the children pressed in eagerly, for they had only once before been allowed inside.

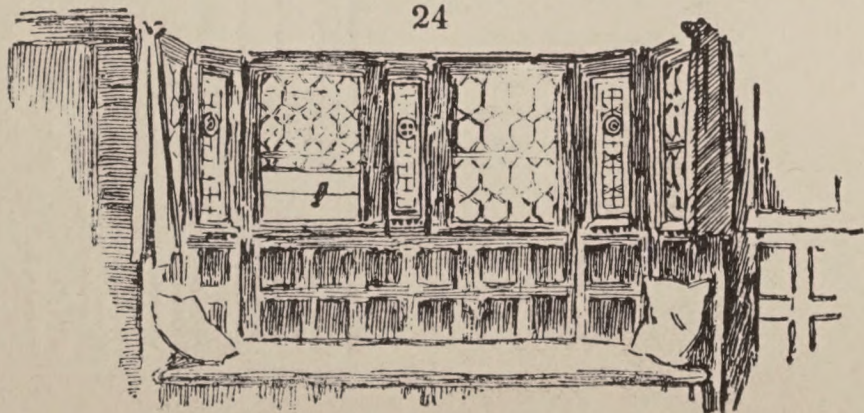
It had the prettiest outlook of all the rooms on the ground floor, for it opened upon the old lawn facing the sea, and the large bay-window occupied the whole width of the room. A round table, davenport, and carved cupboard, an old horse-hair couch and three or four chairs were all the furniture in it; but the carpet was the best in the house, and Matty looked round with the first gleam of hope dawning in her honest grey eyes.

"Us must have this room papered, Tummas; there be Bob Dawlish who'll come up and do it cheap, and a bit o' paint and a cheap pair o' windy curtains 'll make a nice room of it."

The billiard-room was not visited, nor yet the conservatory; but the bedrooms were a sore puzzle to Matty; each one seemed more bare than the last, and she gave it up in despair.

"Us must clean them up and leave them. I must buy the childer a few things and get some more crockery. The new missus maybe is a moneyed woman, and can spend when she gets here. 'Tis to be hoped so, for 'twill be a bad lookout if she be penniless."

"Guy," said Berry, a short time after, "I'm afraid I sha'n't be mistress ever now! And it's no use trying to be it; everybody fights against me. You do, and Thomas does, and Matty does, and now this lady. I wish I was grown-up



Startling News

and a great big woman like the ogre's wife in our picture book, and then you'd all be frightened of me, and I could do just as I liked ! ”

“ You'd never be my mistress,” said Guy, sticking his hands in his pockets, and with legs astride gazing defiantly at her as he spoke, “ and I shall be master here when I grow up ; father says I shall.”

“ You are no better than a servant now,” retorted Berry ; “ Thomas and the Bible says so ! ”

Guy's countenance fell, and Berry, feeling that she had got the best of the argument, changed the subject.

“ Do you like father bringing back this lady with him ? Do you think she will be little and fat like Jane Elstowe's mother ? ”

Jane Elstowe was a little niece of the vicar's who paid him periodical visits, and was the only playmate the twins had.

“ I don't know,” was Guy's response. “ She'll be a step-mother, Matty says, and Cinderella's stepmother was horrid ! ”

“ But she won't live with us, will she ? She'll be with father, and we shall be with Matty, like we always are ! ” And with this view before them, the children were content.

A very enjoyable day was spent not long after in the neighboring town. The twins drove in the trap with Matty early in the morning, and though not of an age to care much for fine clothes, a new suit for Guy and a frock for Berry were such unusual outlays, that they caused much interest.

Matty was persuaded to invest in some red serge for the little girl, though not without some inward qualms of conscience as to what “ Tummas ” should say ; for he was a great authority on dress, and his judgment could not be despised.

But the twins soon got tired of shopping, and when Matty was deep in the choice of various pots and pans in an iron-monger's, they slipped out into the street, watching the people go by with keen delight.

“ Look, Berry, there's the woman in the yellow bonnet



A Puzzling Pair

that we seen in church ; she has been taking her fowls to market. And here's Mr. Curate riding—he can manage his horse better now, can't he ? I wish Mr. Thorpe hadn't gone away, I should like to have told him about father's lady."

"We'll tell Mr. Curate instead. Look ! he sees us, and he's getting off his horse."

Mr. Grant had dismounted on the opposite side of the street, but when he saw the children he crossed over to speak to them.

"When are you coming to see me ?" he asked with a smile ; "Mr. Thorpe has left me the care of his rabbits while he is away, for I'm staying at the Vicarage till he comes back. He told me you often helped him to clean the hutches out. Will you come over and help me one day this week ?"

"We'll come to-morrow," said Berry, with alacrity ; "shall we come to dinner ?"

For a moment the young man hesitated, then laughed. "Yes, come over at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, I dare say my larder will find enough for us all. I will tell old Mrs. Gates you are coming, but ask your father's permission first."

"Oh, father is away," put in Guy, drawing his little head up proudly ; "and Berry and I never ask any one if we may go anywhere, we only say we're going."

"Yes," added Berry, emphatically, "and we're quite, quite sure to come, and we'll come right after breakfast."

He laughed again and went his way, whilst Guy gazed after him in a dreamy manner, and then with a little sigh said to his sister, "Berry, have you been thinking about Jesus coming again ?"

Berry nodded, "Yes ; in bed I do ; I forget it in the daytime. I think He'll come in the night, won't He ? Mr. Curate said so—'like a thief in the night,'—he said. He hasn't come yet, I wonder if He has started ! How long will it take Him to come ?"

"I don't know," was Guy's doubtful response, "we'll



Startling News

ask Mr. Curate to-morrow. I'm hoping He won't come till we're ready, Berry."

"I think I shall be ready," the small maiden said, "at least I should be if He came to-day, I feel so very good—I've changed my mind about it. You see, you have to be good and clean to get to heaven, and I mean to be both. I haven't told Matty, but I got out my best white dress, and I keep it in the drawer nearest my bed, and as soon as I hear the trumpet blow I shall jump out of bed and put it on, and then I shall be ready. Don't you remember that story about the children going up to the golden gate, that father told us, and only those who were in clean white frocks were let inside?"

"I don't believe the Bible says that," said Guy, bluntly, "I shall look and see. Boys can't wear white dresses!"

"Well, you must have a white sailor suit like that strange little boy who came to church one Sunday; and if you can't wait to get it, you can put on a clean night-shirt when you hear the trumpet!"

Matty here appeared, and the subject was dropped; other more enticing topics occupying the busy little brains. The children each had a sixpence to spend, and this was a very serious undertaking. At last Guy announced his intention of buying a drawing-book, and for this purpose a toy shop was entered, but the little sketch books shown him disgusted him.

"I mean a large book like an artist's," he said, rather grandly, and he was directed to a stationer's close by. The twins afforded much amusement to the shop assistants; and Guy was finally satisfied by a great roll of cartridge paper.

"Now, Berry," he said, as they found themselves again in the street, "what are you going to buy?"

"I want such hundreds and hundreds of things, that I don't know which to choose," she said, reflectively. "I want to buy a boat, and a hoop, and some candy, and some flags to put up when father comes home; and I should like one of



A Puzzling Pair

those ugly masks in the toy shop, and a pistol, but I think what I should like best of all would be some fireworks."

Guy's dreamy eyes brightened, for he was a true boy at heart.

"Oh, buy some fireworks, Berry, and we'll let them off when father comes home."

So a small selection of squibs found their way into Berry's pocket, and they returned home with Matty, well satisfied with their purchases.

When Thomas saw the red serge, he lifted his hands in horror.

"'Tis the mark of the beast ye'll be puttin' on her! 'Tis the color of the wiman and beast in the last days. Scarlet is an abomination, and it ill becomes a Christian wiman to deck a little maid in sich gaudiness!"

Matty seemed abashed at first, then she remonstrated with her spouse,—

"'Tis only one of God's colors, after all. The poppies in the field"—

"Ay, ay, 'Of the grass that perisheth'; but 'tis not the color for an immortal soul to be garbed with!"

The children did not quite understand the discussion.

"Soldiers have scarlet coats," put in Guy.

"And so have huntsmen, and I shall have a scarlet jacket when I'm grown up, and hunt the foxes all day long!" And Berry danced up and down at this inspiring prospect.

"Both on 'em spending their time in slaughter," snapped Thomas; "ay, they do well to be clothed in scarlet!"

Berry was going to quote Red Riding Hood, but Matty closed the discussion.

"There, let it be, Tummas, and take the scarlet out o' your Sunday neckcloth, and out o' your handkerchies afore you croak at my purchases!"

The next morning at breakfast Guy announced, with some importance in his tone, "We're going to have dinner with our new clergyman to-day."



Startling News

Matty opened her eyes. "And pray who invited you?"

"He did. He wants us to help him clean the rabbits. Mr. Thorpe is away, and he has got to do it by himself."

"When did you see him? I never knowed such childer for pickin' up fresh acquaintances!"

"We always like to know everybody," said Berry, her pert little nose rather high in the air; "and everybody likes to know us, don't they, Guy?"

Guy nodded, adding truthfully, "But I don't like crowds, if I don't know them." Then gazing dreamily out of the window he said, "I shall fill this house with all my friends when I'm master here. I sha'n't have a single empty room—I hate empty rooms!"

"And when I'm mistress," put in Berry, eagerly, "I shall ask strangers as well as friends to come and live with me, and I'll have fires and candles in every room, and parties every night, and we'll dance and sing like the fairies!"

"Ye'll be idle, graceless spendthrifts," said Thomas, severely; "ye have the makin's of it now, and it'll be good for ye if the new mistress will take ye in hand."

"She won't be our mistress," laughed Berry, saucily; "only yours."

Thomas rose to pour out the torrents of his wrath upon such a speech; but the twins, having finished their breakfast, ran away, and a short time after they were galloping over the down on their pony toward the vicarage.

It looked, as it was, a bachelor's abode; but after the barrenness and desolation of the manor, the tiny house seemed a paradise of comfort and wealth to the children as they entered it. They found Mr. Grant in his study, and Berry looked with a little awe at the piles of books and papers round him.

"Are you writing your sermon?" she asked him, "and is it going to be more about Jesus coming down from heaven?"

"Do you like to hear about that?" he asked, smiling, as



A Puzzling Pair

he stood up and stretched himself to his full height, looking down upon the eager-faced little couple with some interest.

“Yes,” responded Guy; “and it’s dreadfully true, isn’t it? Berry and I have talked a lot about it.”

“Gloriously true!” said Mr. Grant, a glow of color coming into his thin cheeks, and a bright sparkle into his eyes. “Don’t you think the children should rejoice when the father returns? Ought not the servants to be ready to welcome their master home?”

“Yes, we’re pretty glad when father comes back,” said Berry, thoughtfully; “but Matty said this morning she wished he would stay away a little longer, for she would never have things ready.”

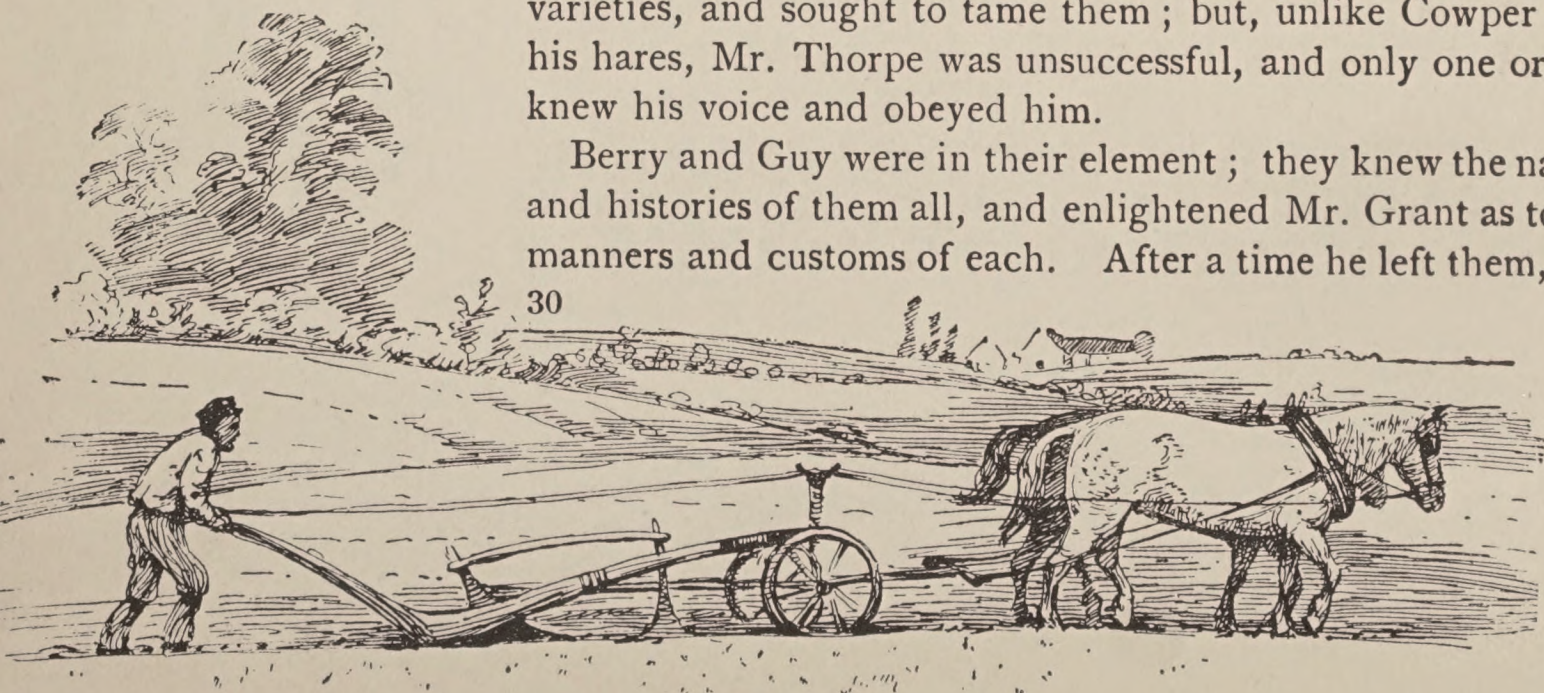
“And that is what we Christians are virtually saying when we think of the wastes of uncultivated land, and the cry from our brothers abroad in the midst of their bondage, ignorance and superstition! We are not ready for the Master, His work has been neglected; but instead of putting our hands at once to the plough, we sleep away our time and take our ease. And then—‘In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.’”

The children were silent as Mr. Grant’s voice rang out in triumph at these last words; then, as he met their puzzled gaze, he smiled and recovered himself.

“I am talking above your heads,” he said; “come and see the rabbits.”

He led them out to a small enclosure in a paddock by the house, where there were about a dozen rabbit hutches. His vicar’s great hobby was rearing rabbits. He had many varieties, and sought to tame them; but, unlike Cowper with his hares, Mr. Thorpe was unsuccessful, and only one or two knew his voice and obeyed him.

Berry and Guy were in their element; they knew the names and histories of them all, and enlightened Mr. Grant as to the manners and customs of each. After a time he left them, and



Startling News

went back to his study, and the twins worked away happily till one o'clock, when they came in, hot and dirty, to say that every hutch was cleaned, and that now they were ready for dinner. Mr. Grant put by his sermon then, and devoted himself to the entertainment of his little guests for the rest of the afternoon. Guy and Berry did full justice to the hot mutton, rice pudding, and tart that was provided for them, and chatted away unceasingly during dinner; but after the meal was over, Berry said,—

“Now you must do what Mr. Thorpe always does! Come and lie down on the big sofa in the study, and smoke your pipe, and Guy and I will sit on your legs and we will have a talk.”

“But,” protested the bewildered young man; “I never smoke, and as to talking, what have we been doing but talk ever since you came in from the rabbits!”

“That hasn't been proper talk,” said Guy, in tones of scorn; “that's just outside remarks we've been making!”

Mr. Grant meekly allowed himself to be led to the sofa, and when all three were comfortably settled, he asked, “Now what do you generally talk about?”

“Mr. Thorpe always says first, ‘Let's talk about life,’ and then we begin,” announced Berry, with decision.

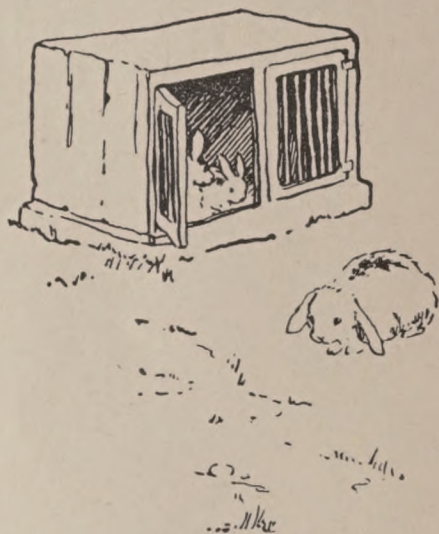
“Well, tell me what things in life interest you!”

“Lots of things,” Guy put in; his dreamy look coming over him, “I talk about the pictures I'm going to paint when I grow up, and Mr. Thorpe tells us what he used to do and think about when he was a little boy; but I think to-day we would like you to tell us a little more about”—

“About Jesus coming back again,” interrupted Berry, briskly, “and about getting ready for Him, like we are getting ready for father and his lady.”

“Are you ready?” asked Mr. Grant, laying his hand gently on the curly head so close to him.

Berry blinked her eyes and knitted her brows.



A Puzzling Pair

"Sometimes I think I am, and sometimes I aren't!" she said.

"Berry changes her mind about everything every day," said Guy; then he added, eagerly, "What will be the first thing that Jesus will do? Will He send all the wicked to hell right away? I've tried to find it out in the Bible, but I don't know where to look for it."

"He will gather His sheep together first, those that have died will rise again, and all who love and serve Him here. They will meet Him in the air we are told. 'The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.'"

Mr. Grant's face shone as he repeated this verse, and his upward look was radiant.

Berry looked at Guy.

"We really must be caught up too," she said, enthusiastically; "it will be lovely!"

"Are you ready?" again asked Mr. Grant; but this time his question was directed to Guy.

The boy shook his head. "No," he said, sorrowfully, "I s'pose if Jesus were to come to-night I should be left behind."

"But why should you?"

Guy did not answer; his soft brown eyes were gazing wistfully into the glowing coals of the fire in front of them, but Berry broke in impetuously,—

"He says he must get saved like Joe Tucker, and he can't cry over his sins. I'm not going to try. I haven't done a proper sin since last Monday when I ran away from Matty and threw the basin of chicken corn in her face when she caught me; so if Jesus comes before I've done another sin, I shall be nearly ready I think!"

"She says she has only to put on a clean frock and she'll be all right," said Guy, raising an earnest, puzzled face to the young clergyman. "I wish you'd explain things to us, for I'm sure she's wrong!"



Startling News

"It says in the Bible everybody wears a white dress in heaven, I know it does," persisted Berry.

"Yes, but how do they get them?" Mr. Grant asked with a smile; "it tells us the white robes were clean because they had been washed in the blood of the Lamb; and don't you see, little ones, that that is only a picture of our hearts? It is the inside of us wants washing, not the outside, our sins all come from our hearts, and it is our sins must be washed away."

"That's what I think," said Guy, drawing his knees up until his chin rested on them, and looking intently at Mr. Grant, "but God won't wash our sins away unless we're really sorry, and I'm not sorry enough yet, so I shall have to wait."

"I'm not going to get any more sins," said Berry; "and I expect God will forget mine last week. He is very busy, isn't He, Mr. Grant?"

Mr. Grant was about to speak, when the servant came into the room, saying,—

"If you please, sir, Farmer Kelly has sent word he'd like to see you, he's very bad to-day."

This summons broke up the little party at once, and the twins accompanied their new friend a part of the way on their pony. As he parted with them he said,—

"We must have another talk about these things soon, children, but don't forget that the Lord Jesus suffered punishment for your sins when He died upon the Cross. You give Him your Hearts, and they will be washed whiter than snow. He will make you ready to meet Him."

With that he rode away, and the twins returned home more thoughtful than usual.





Chapter IV

A WELCOME

It was a dull, grey afternoon in the beginning of December when a carriage from the neighboring town brought the bride and bridegroom to the Manor House.

Though barely four o'clock, dusk had set in, and the grey mist stealing up from the sea shrouded all outside, only a few twinkling lights in the casement windows being discernible.

Inside, there had been great preparations for the new mistress, and when the front door swung open, revealing the old square hall, the scene remained long after imprinted on the memory of the bride. A dim oil lamp hung in the centre, but that was quite eclipsed by a roaring fire of wooden logs burning merrily away in the old-fashioned hearth. On the left of the fireplace stood Matty, arrayed in Sunday gown and courtesying up and down in a great state of nervousness and excitement; to the right stood Thomas, grim and self-possessed; and on the bottom step of the old stone staircase in the midst of the hall, stood two little figures holding between them a banner composed of all shades of colored tissue paper, and the words in crooked, uneven letters: "God bless Father and Stepmother!"

Berry in her red serge dress, and Guy in his suit of dark blue, with their rosy faces and curly heads certainly added to

A Welcome

the charm of the picture; and the welcome in its quaintness and originality touched the father's heart. He drew them to him, and then placing their little hands in that of his wife's, said with a slight laugh to hide his emotion,—

“Here, my dear, are two of the veriest pickles and scamps I believe on the face of the earth! I hope they will afford you as much comfort and amusement as they do me.”

Mrs. Forrester stooped and kissed them; then turned to say a kind word to the old servants, whilst the twins gazed at her every movement with the greatest curiosity.

She was not a young girl: her face would not have been pronounced beautiful, but it was fresh and sweet, and few who caught the brightness of her smile and the sparkling animation in her eyes would call her unattractive.

Though the bloom of her youth had passed, years could not steal away from her that charm of quaint originality and strong personality which she possessed; and the children felt instinctively that they had gained a friend. They watched her a moment after ascending the stairs—a tall slight figure in a grey silk dress and fur cloak—and they heard the bright eager tone of her voice as she turned to their father,—

“Tired? Not a bit of it. I feel in an enchanted castle! What a dear old place it is!”

“I like her,” whispered Berry; “she looked at me as if she liked me.”

“We'll wait till they are sitting down to dinner,” responded Guy, nodding his head up and down very mysteriously; “and then we will give them the other welcome!”

It was not long before Mr. Forrester brought his wife downstairs again to the dining-room. Feeling afresh the dreariness and barrenness of the empty rooms, he told her that he would take her through the house the next morning. The twins followed them in rather shyly, and their quick eyes noted the little shiver that Mrs. Forrester involuntarily gave as she looked about her.



A Puzzling Pair

The round table, already spread for dinner, with two lighted wax candles upon it, had a ghostly appearance in the dusk, and Mr. Forrester stepped forward and stirred the fire into a blaze.

"I am afraid it does not look very homelike," he said, apologetically; "but we only use this room for meals. I am in my study, or out of doors most of the day."

Then he added, suddenly: "I believe you ladies generally have a cup of tea in the afternoon, don't you? I should think you would like one now. Berry, call Matty."

Berry scampered off, and appeared instantly after with that worthy.

"I've taken the liberty, sir, to put a cup of tea in the morning-room for the mistress. I thought it would be more cheerful than this."

For an instant a shadow crossed Mr. Forrester's face; then he said brightly,—

"Capital, Matty! We will all go there. Come along, chicks!"

Mrs. Forrester's future sitting-room was a picture of coziness. The curtains were drawn, a small tea-table was placed near the fire, and if the fresh wall paper and bright chintz covers to the chairs and couch were not in the best artistic taste, they presented a scene of home comfort that was lacking in every other room.

"This is delightful!" exclaimed Mrs. Forrester, looking at her husband with one of her radiant smiles. "Now if I am to have a cup of tea you must join me, for you say we do not dine for another two hours, and it will be most refreshing to both of us."

They were a happy little party; the twins hovered round, anxious to do the honors of the house, which much amused their father; and Mrs. Forrester seemed thoroughly at home in her new surroundings.

"Do I look a cruel stepmother?" she asked, presently,



A Welcome

meeting Guy's intent gaze, and drawing him to her. "Tell me what you and Berry think of my coming here."

"We didn't know what you'd be like," said Guy, gravely.

"And what do you think of me now?"

"I don't know," was the dubious reply.

Berry moved nearer her stepmother at once.

"You don't look cross," she said, emphatically. "Guy and I shall run away from you if you're cross; we always do from Matty and Thomas. Have you come here to help father write his books?"

Mr. Forrester laughed aloud.

"Yes, Berry, she has come to look after your idle old father, and keep him up to his work."

"That's what I shall do to Guy when he paints his pictures," said Berry with a nod; "I always tell him what to draw. Don't I, Guy?"

Guy bent his head in confusion. Any illusion to his talent brought on a fit of shyness at once, but Berry went on,—

"He has been doing such a lovely picture since father has been away, and he's beginning it all over again on a fresh sheet of paper we bought in the town. Would you like to see it?"

"I should, if Guy likes to show it to me," said Mrs. Forrester, caressing the boy's curly head with her hand. "What is it about?"

"It's Jesus coming down from heaven with all the angels," said Berry, "and it's nearly done, at least the people coming down are done, but I want him to make the people going up, and Matty and Thomas must be going and father too of course."

The astonishment in the eyes of husband and wife did not deter the little speaker, who went on with a wrinkle between her eyes. "I should like him to draw him and me going up in the air, but we're afraid it mightn't be quite true. We



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think we mightn't be there, for we're not ready yet, at least not properly ready ! ”

“ May I see this picture, Guy ? ” asked Mrs. Forrester, gently. Guy shuffled with his feet, and twisted his hands nervously together.

“ No, ” he muttered, and his stepmother quickly changed the subject, saying in a whisper to him, “ Some day when you know me better you will show it to me I dare say. ”

Time slipped away ; the twins chatted to their hearts' delight, and were never once rebuked by their father, who leaned back in an easy chair in placid content.

When dinner time came they were dismissed, and husband and wife sat down in solemn state in the large dining-room. Thomas waited upon them ; both he and Matty were bent upon impressing their new mistress with a sense of their own ability to do things in correct style ; and his face and form were as rigid and solemn as any city footman.

But suddenly there was a tremendous conflagration seen outside the windows, and as Mr. Forrester started from his seat exclaiming, “ The stables must be on fire ! ” a firecracker came dashing against the window-panes, followed by a larger one, and as Mrs. Forrester looked out, she saw dancing round a large bonfire, in front of the house, the two little figures of the twins.

“ 'Tis only for a welcome, ” said Thomas, apologetically ; but Mr. Forrester opened the window sharply.

“ Come indoors at once, ” he called out ; “ you will be burning the house down ! Thomas, go and put that fire out : if any sparks fly on the roof it will burn like tinder. Tell them to stop letting off those firecrackers immediately ; those children are really beyond all control ! ”

“ Their motives are good, ” said his wife ; “ you must not be hard on them the first night, Warwick, for my sake. ”

Berry danced into the room a moment after.

“ Isn't it fun ! ” she exclaimed, quite regardless of her



A Welcome

father's frown. "Did you see our firecrackers? Thomas is running after Guy all round the garden with a stick, and Guy is letting off firecrackers as he goes! Why didn't you come out, father? Guy and I made the bonfire all ourselves, and there's such a big blaze!"

"Go and tell your brother to come indoors immediately. I am very angry with you both. Who gave you leave to make a bonfire so near the house?"

Berry opened her eyes. "We did it for a welcome, father, and I bought the fireworks with my own money. Thomas knew we were going to do it, and Matty said she remembered when you brought mother, that is dead, here. You had bells ringing and they put up an evergreen arch!"

"Go to bed both of you, and don't let us see you again to-night." Mr. Forrester spoke sharply, and Berry darted out of the room like a flash of light, hearing her father add, "I shall be glad when you take them in hand, Gwen; they have had so much freedom that they are quite unmanageable."

It was nearly an hour later. The two children lay awake in their small beds, and they were eagerly discussing the new arrival and the events of the evening.

"Father said she must take us in her hand. What did that mean, Guy? He spoke it so cross, too."

"When Thomas takes me in his hand, he gives me a shaking," said Guy, thoughtfully, "or else he gives me a hit. You should have seen him tearing after me. He said I'd given him heart palitation, or some long name like that, and he took me by the collar so tight that my shirt button came off!"

"And she's going to catch hold of us like that, do you think?"

"Hush! Here is somebody coming!"

Somebody proved to be Mrs. Forrester, candle in hand; and as she entered the large, bare room and noticed the two small beds standing in opposite corners, she again gave an involuntary shiver.



A Puzzling Pair



"Are you awake, little ones?" she asked.

"Wide awake," responded Berry, sitting up in bed at once.

Mrs. Forrester came and sat down on the edge of the little girl's bed.

"You had better lie down and keep the clothes over you, for it is very cold here. Do you and Guy sleep here all alone?"

"O' course we do.

"I have come to wish you both good night, and to thank you for your loving welcome."

"Did you like the bonfire?" was the quick response. "Father and Thomas were cross, but Guy and I wouldn't have burned the house down—o' course we wouldn't! And Guy and I have been thinking what welcome Jesus will get when He comes. If only He would let us know, what a grand day it would be! I'm sure everybody would like to make bonfires and send up fireworks!"

"And ring the Church bells, and let off some big guns, and have a lot of banners and flags flying!"

This from Guy, who sat up in bed to give emphasis to his words.

"Who talks to you about these things?" asked Mrs. Forrester, smiling.

"Mr. Curate told us all he thinks about Jesus coming down from heaven. Matty and Thomas aren't expecting Him like Guy and me, but Thomas shakes his head and says 'very true' when we talks to him about it. I'm not quite sure"—and here Berry rested her curly head against her stepmother's shoulder, and stared at the flickering candle—"I'm not quite sure whether I should like Him to come back to-night; I'm not quite ready."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, I don't feel ready. Mr. Curate says God will make us ready if we ask Him, but I haven't properly asked Him."

"I have," put in Guy, earnestly; "but He is waiting."

A Welcome

Mrs. Forrester crossed over to his bed. These children interested her intensely.

"What is God waiting for?" she asked, gently.

"Till I can have a good cry for my sins."

"And then?"

"Then God will save me like Joe Tucker."

"Does the Bible tell you that?"

"No; but Thomas does. Berry and me don't read the Bible much; it's too old for us. We know all the stories in it. Matty has told them to us since we were little babies; but Thomas always gets our scoldings out of it."

Mrs. Forrester laughed, and asked,—

"Can you both read?"

"Yes," said Berry, proudly; "father taught us *years* ago; and Guy can write, but I can't."

"How would you both like to come into my sitting-room downstairs every morning after breakfast, and do a little writing and a few sums?"

"That's doing lessons," said Guy, rather suspiciously.

"Matty is always saying we ought to do lessons."

"Yes, lessons are very pleasant sometimes, if you don't have too many of them."

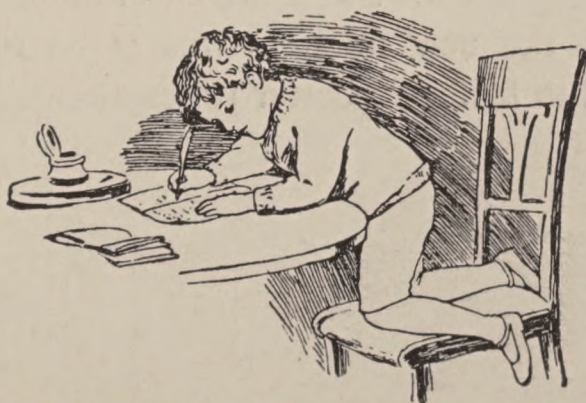
"Well, we'll come to-morrow, and see what they're like."

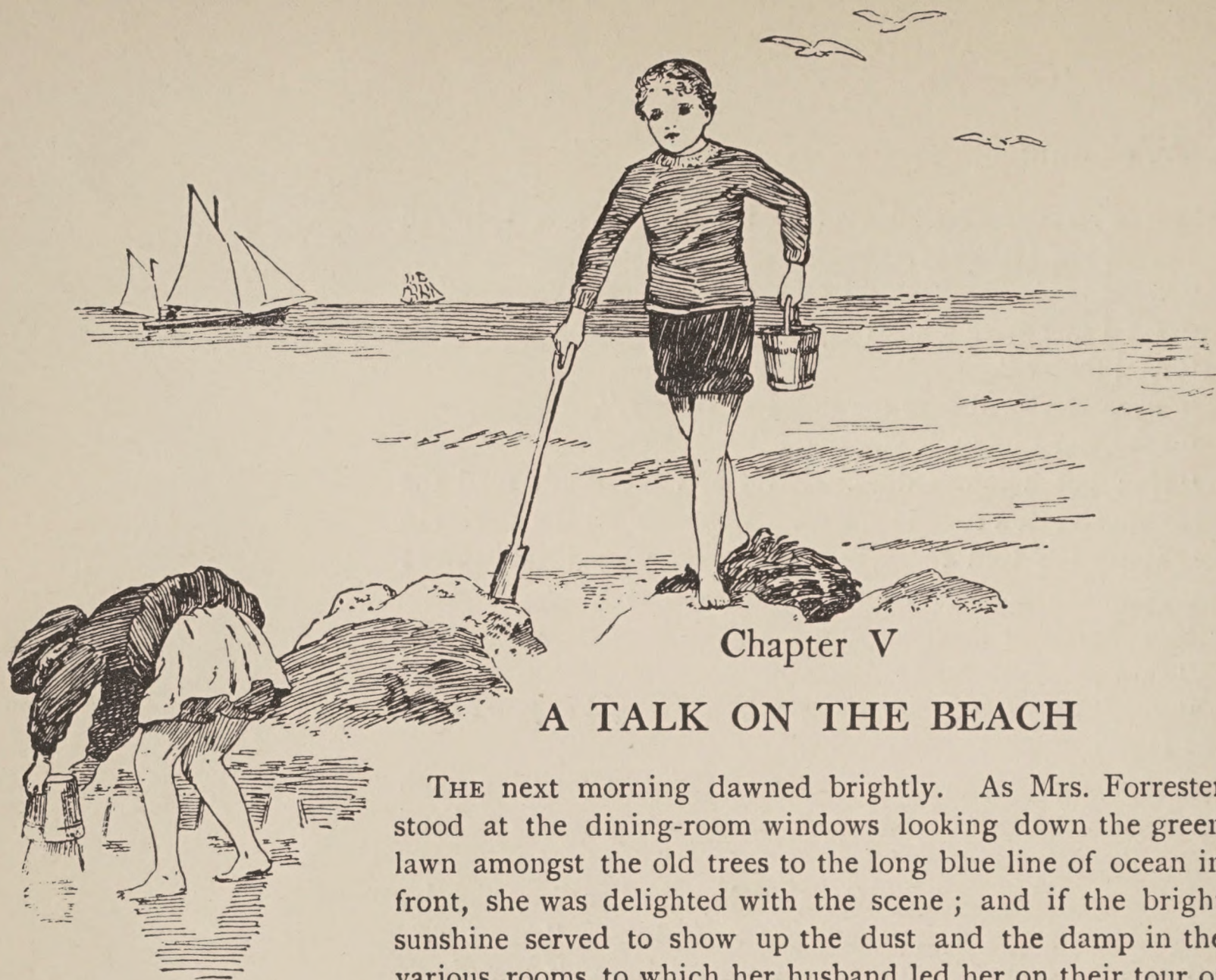
And with this consent, Mrs. Forrester kissed them both and left them; but her face had a thoughtful look upon it as she joined her husband again downstairs.

"Do you like her, Guy?" Berry whispered, as the door shut upon her.

"Yes; I think I'll make a picture of her."

And this showed that the young artist's heart was won.





Chapter V

A TALK ON THE BEACH

THE next morning dawned brightly. As Mrs. Forrester stood at the dining-room windows looking down the green lawn amongst the old trees to the long blue line of ocean in front, she was delighted with the scene; and if the bright sunshine served to show up the dust and the damp in the various rooms to which her husband led her on their tour of inspection through the house, it also enabled her to take a much cheerier view of it than she otherwise could have done.

"We will do little by little," she said; "let us make the few rooms we use comfortable first, and leave the rest as they are."

Mr. Forrester left her soon to ride over to the Hall for a business interview with Lord Warren, and she then made her way to the kitchen. Matty was only too willing to show her the barrenness of the linen-closets and storerooms; and the scarcity of the children's wardrobes quite shocked her.

Still, her hopeful buoyancy and bright tone did much to win Matty's faithful heart; and the latter confided to Thomas afterward that the new mistress was "the right sort, and would be equal to bringing better times about."

A Talk on the Beach

Having inquired for the children, and finding they were out on the beach, Mrs. Forrester went into the old garden, rejoicing in the fresh, keen breeze from the sea, and was soon down on the sand at the bottom of the stone steps. The tide was out, and two little figures were busy on the rocks,—Berry with her hands full of seaweed, Guy with pail and stick catching crabs.

“Hi!” called out Guy at the sight of her; “come on, stepmother. Do you like crabs for tea?”

“Come on,” echoed Berry; “we’ll show you how to catch them without getting pinched!”

They were in their rough serges, both very wet and rather dirty, but the rosy glow on their cheeks and the sparkle in their eyes, told how much they were enjoying themselves.

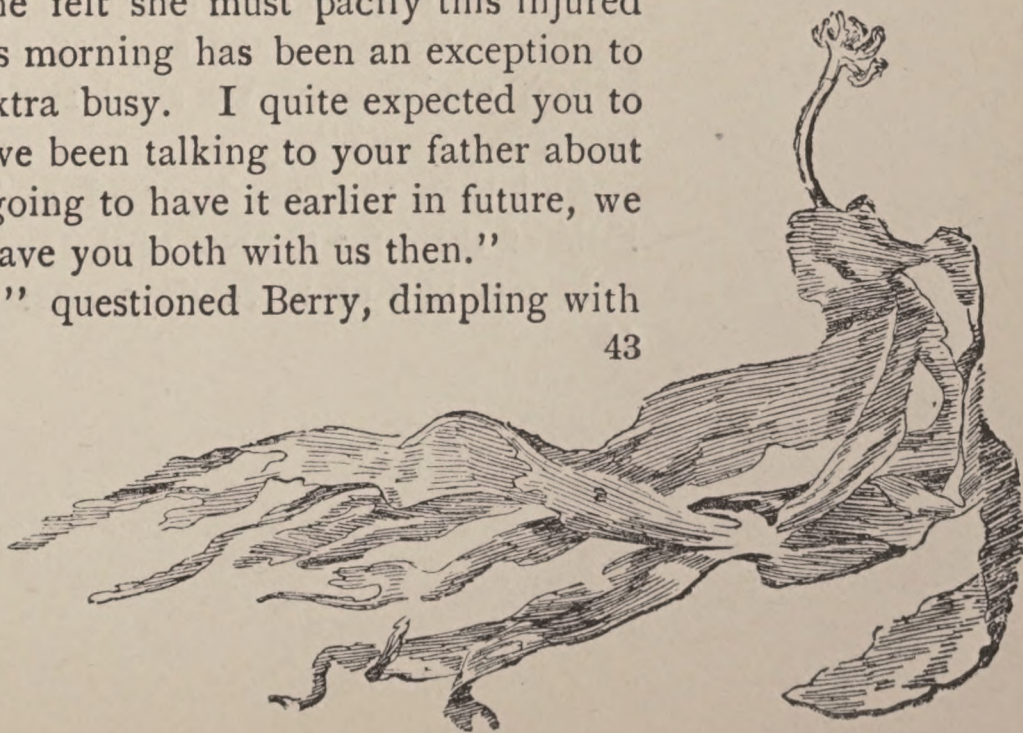
“I thought you were coming to my room this morning?” said their stepmother. “I haven’t seen you yet to wish you good-morning.”

“We only wish good-morning to people out of doors,” said Guy, standing up with one leg in a pool, the other on a rock; “besides,” he went on, staring at her gravely, “we did go to your room after our breakfast, and you weren’t there. We have breakfast at half-past seven, and Matty said you were still in bed.”

“Yes, you broked your promise,” Berry said, with a little decided nod; “so we came out here, and we said we didn’t care nothing about you.”

“I really am very sorry,” Mrs. Forrester said, an amused smile in her eyes, as she felt she must pacify this injured young couple; “but this morning has been an exception to the rule. I have been extra busy. I quite expected you to breakfast with us. I have been talking to your father about it, and as he and I are going to have it earlier in future, we think we should like to have you both with us then.”

“In the dining-room?” questioned Berry, dimpling with



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smiles; "and shall we have eggs and bacon like father does? And will you make Thomas stand behind our chairs and take away our plates like he does father's? Because Thomas won't let Guy and me be master and mistress over him in the kitchen, and he is a servant, isn't he?"

"I don't think you and Guy should want to be master and mistress over an old man like that. Now don't you think you could leave those poor little crabs alone, and come indoors with me?"

"Shall we, Guy?"

There was no thought of obedience, only whether it would be pleasanter than the present employment, but Guy decided it.

"Yes, we'll come. The first in gets the sofa, Berry!"

Away they darted, tearing along the beach and up the garden with loud shrieks of delight; and Mrs. Forrester wondered, as she followed more leisurely, how long it would take to tame these wild little beings.

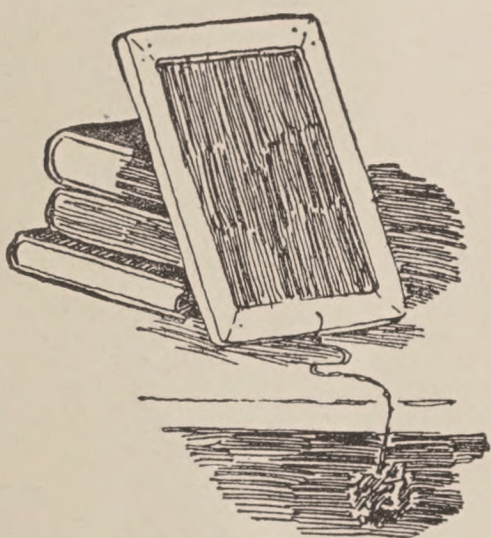
She kept them only an hour, and perhaps the hardest work of all was keeping the little tongues still. Berry settled down to her writing with wonderful contentment, and Guy grappled with figures on a slate with a determined front; but the constant chatter was a detriment to much being accomplished, and Mrs. Forrester was wise enough not to check it too much on this first day.

"Do you like it, Guy?" asked Berry, when the hour came to an end, and Mrs. Forrester said she would keep them no longer.

"Yes," was the reply, and Berry then turned to her step-mother. "We'll come another day—perhaps to-morrow—only if you're cross we shall run away and hide from you; won't we, Guy?"

And then the two departed, and Mrs. Forrester saw very little of them for the rest of the day.

It was two or three days after this that, playing on the



A Talk on the Beach

beach, the twins saw Mr. Grant approaching. They ran to meet him immediately.

“Are you coming to see us, Mr. Curate?”

“I was not,” was the reply. “I am taking a walk for the good of my health.”

“Isn’t your health good? Matty said she thought you had a terrible cough; she said you reminded her of her sister’s son who died of a cough, I think.” And Guy’s eyes were full of sympathy as he spoke.

Mr. Grant laughed. His thin cheeks and the hectic flush that came and went in them so fitfully were the cause of much pity amongst his parishioners, who were getting to take more interest in him than they had ever done in their vicar. Perhaps it was his earnest and tender sympathy with all their troubles; perhaps the power of a holy life, for he lived as he preached, and his sermons carried the conviction to all his hearers that religion was a reality and a delight to him.

He sat down in the shelter of the twins’ cave, for they bore him thither at once, and prepared himself to listen to their eager confidences.

“Yes, we like our stepmother very much; she laughs and sings and runs about the house, and she is knitting some stockings for Guy and me.”

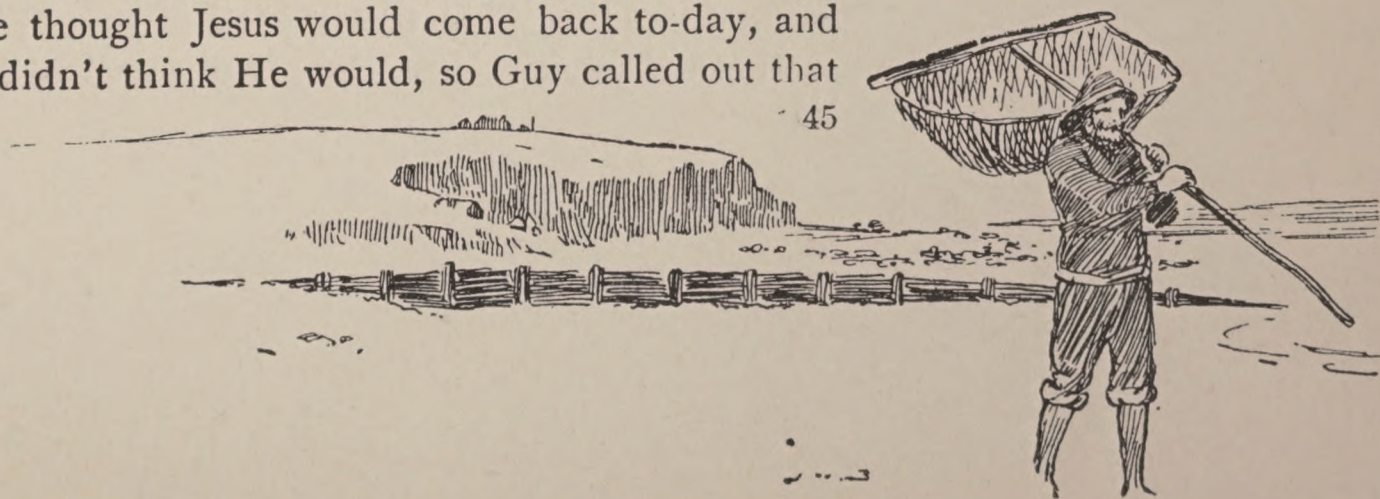
“And we have breakfast and dinner in the dining-room, and only tea in the kitchen, and we call her ‘motherkin.’ ”

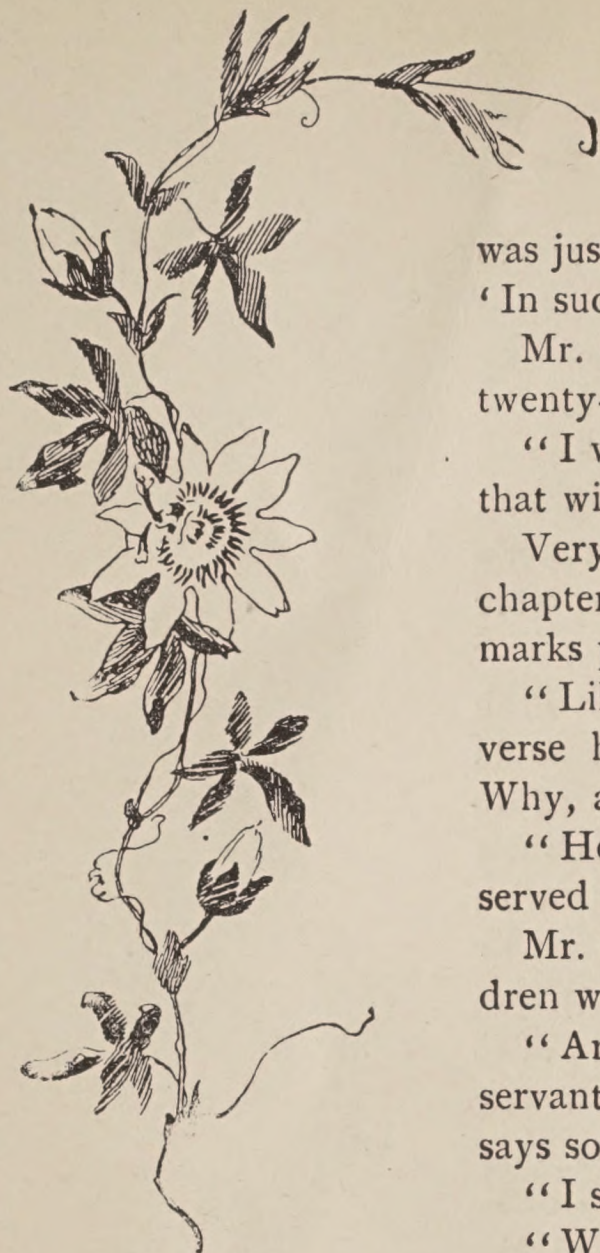
“Will you tell us more about Jesus coming back?” asked Berry, suddenly.

“Do you think He will come back to-day?” Guy inquired rather anxiously, throwing himself down on the sand and looking up at Mr. Grant with solemn, large eyes.

Berry broke in impetuously,—

“Guy asked old Sam, who was going out shrimping this morning, if he thought Jesus would come back to-day, and Sam said he didn’t think He would, so Guy called out that





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was just the reason He would very likely come, for it says—
‘In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.’”

Mr. Grant took out his pocket Bible, and opened it at the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew.

“I will read you what the Lord Himself said about it, and that will be better than any words of mine.”

Very gravely and reverently he read the latter part of the chapter, explaining as he went, and the twins’ intelligent remarks proved that they were taking it in.

“Like lightning!” said Guy, after the twenty-seventh verse had been read; “He can’t have started yet, Berry! Why, as soon as He starts He will be here!”

“He might be here before we finish the chapter,” observed Berry, looking out upon the ocean in front of her.

Mr. Grant read on, and finished the chapter. The children were silent for a minute, then Berry said doubtfully,—

“Are Guy and me God’s servants? I don’t want to be a servant. Thomas says Guy is no better than one—the Bible says so; but he can’t find a text about me being a servant.”

“I should like to be God’s servant,” Guy put in softly.

“What is a servant’s chief duty?” asked Mr. Grant.

“To do what they are told,” Guy said, quickly. “I’m always telling Thomas and Matty that when I grow up I’ll make them do what I tell them. When I’m master I shall!”

“And do you do what God tells you?” asked Mr. Grant. Guy considered.

“No!” he said; “but I don’t think I’m old enough to be one of God’s servants.”

“You are quite old enough. No child is too young to obey.”

“We don’t obey any one but father,” put in Berry, quickly; “not unless we’re quite obliged to.”

“If you don’t obey God you must be disobeying Him,” Mr. Grant went on quietly. “I could read you another verse from the Bible that says that Jesus Christ will come again, and punish those who are disobedient to God.”

A Talk on the Beach

"I know," nodded Berry, looking at Mr. Grant very solemnly; "Thomas is always preaching about it on Sunday. I expect He would cut me asunder, and send me away to weep and gnash my teeth. If He came back to-day He would."

Guy looked at his sister with awe, then with firmly closed lips he muttered: "I will be saved, I won't go to hell!"

Then Mr. Grant leaned forward earnestly, and with glowing eyes said: "My dear children, God doesn't want you to go to hell. Jesus died to save you from that. He left heaven and came down here to do it. God knew you couldn't be perfectly good and obedient children, so Jesus said He would come and be good and obedient instead of you. He said He would be punished for your sins. God won't punish you now. He doesn't punish twice."

Guy's earnest gaze never left Mr. Grant's face.

"*God doesn't punish twice*," he repeated, with emphasis; "then why does Thomas tell me I'll go to hell if I don't repent?"

Mr. Grant hesitated.

"He means if you won't take Jesus as your Saviour, you will be lost," he said, slowly. "Some people won't have anything to do with Jesus, they want to get to Heaven without His help, and some sin against Him willfully, and do not feel sorry for their sins. Suppose you were put in prison for being very wicked, and you were told you would have to suffer death as a punishment, and then one day I were to walk in and give you a paper, which was the Queen's pardon, saying she had forgiven you—wouldn't you be glad to take the paper?"

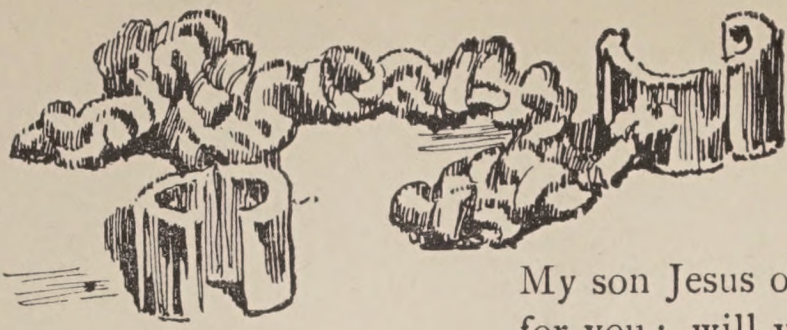
"Yes," said the boy, wrinkling his brows in an effort to understand.

"You wouldn't tell me to take the pardon away for you didn't want it, that you were going to wait till you were more sorry—till you could have a good cry for your sins?"

"No," said Guy.

"Then God is doing that for you and Berry. He is holding out a pardon to each of you. He says, 'Here, dear children,





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My son Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice, and died to get this for you ; will you have it ? Will you believe Me when I tell you that I never punish twice—that your sins were laid on Jesus, and He bore your punishment ? I want you to be My little servants. Take your pardon and thank Me for it ; and then I will help you to serve Me faithfully.' ”

“ And I shall be saved like that ? ”

“ Christ died for our sins,” quoted Mr. Grant, looking at the boy’s flushed face. “ Would you not like to take your pardon from God and thank Him for it ? ”

For a moment Guy was silent, then he started to his feet, and ran out of the cave as fast as his legs could carry him.

Mr. Grant felt astonished, but Berry looked up gravely.

“ He’s gone to do it.”

“ Where has he gone ? ”

“ Why, into the house o’ course, to his bed. Don’t you speak to God at your bed ? We always do, we can’t say our prayers nowhere else. Guy did tell me he spoke to God in the garden the other day, but it wasn’t proper and I told him so.”

Mr. Grant could not help smiling at the self-assured tone of the little maiden ; then drawing her to him, he asked,—

“ And what is Berry going to do ? ”

Berry looked down and fingered a big seal on Mr. Grant’s watch chain.

“ I don’t understand like Guy,” she said, “ it’s too difficult. I want to be ready when Jesus comes back, but I’m drefffully afraid I sha’n’t be quick enough.”

“ If you ask God now to give you your pardon, He will do it, Berry, and that will blot out all your sins, and put your name in the Book of Life.”

Berry blinked her eyes very fast. “ And if I’m wicked to-morrow ? ” she asked.

“ Jesus will wash those sins away too, if you ask Him, and He will help you not to be wicked if you are His little servant.”

Berry seemed wrapped in meditation.

A Talk on the Beach

"Jesus said 'Watch'; I can watch for Him coming back even if I'm not ready," she said, then with one of her quick-silvery changes of mood she added, "Oh, do come and see Ginger's puppies in the stable, they're such darlings, they're all going to be drowned, but I told Thomas I should save one, and he said I shouldn't, so I took it this morning, and I hid it in an old riding boot of father's in his dressing-room."

"But that is rather cruel; the poor puppy will starve."

"Will it?"

"Of course it will. It can't live without its mother."

"Oh, well, I'll ask motherkin to take care of it, she'll be a stepmother to it like she is to Guy and me. Do come, will you?"

"No, I want to go farther on while the tide is out. Say good-bye to Guy for me, and remember, 'In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.'"

The young clergyman strode away, with a rapt glance to the heavens above, and Berry with her finger in her mouth, watched him disappear round the corner of a cliff. Then with eyes twinkling with mischief, she ran toward the house saying under her breath, "I'll take the puppy out of the boot, and I'll put it in motherkin's work-bag under her knitting."





Chapter VI

FILLING UP THE PICTURE

JUST before dinner that evening Mrs. Forrester found the twins lying flat on the tiger skin, their favorite position before the dining-room fire.

Guy with knitted brow and pursed-up lips was intent on a large sheet of cartridge paper, and Berry with big, solemn eyes was regarding him with perplexity.

"Couldn't you just make me, Guy?"

"No," was the gruff and decided reply, "my picture is true."

"But I shall be ready by then—I'm sure I shall."

"Will you be ready to-night?"

"I—I don't know."

"What are you so busy about?" asked Mrs. Forrester, in her bright tone, coming up to them.

Guy started violently, put his hand over his paper, then thought better of it.

"You can see it if you won't laugh," he said. "I began to paint some of the people in one corner, but they're rather mixed up."

It certainly was a wonderful work of art. The ungainly bodies seemed sprawling in all directions, and legs and arms were hopelessly entangled. The top half of the sheet of paper was crowded with figures, but there were only two or three in an empty space at the bottom.

Filling up the Picture

"That's Thomas and Matty," said Berry, eagerly, putting her finger on two indescribable kind of beings, "Thomas has got his big Bible, and Matty her hymn-book."

"Hasn't she—er—rather big eyes?" questioned Mrs. Forrester, gravely.

"That's her spec'acles, Matty always wears them on Sunday, and it's a kind of Sunday, you know," the young artist explained, hurriedly.

"And who are these three just below them?"

"That's father, and you, and Guy," put in Berry. "He has been making himself this afternoon, I think he might make me, don't you think so?"

Guy flushed up at once. "I'm going to make Mr. Curate," he said, trying to change the subject.

"Why don't you draw Berry?" asked Mrs. Forrester. "I'm afraid I don't quite remember what the picture is about."

"It is Jesus coming down from heaven and us going up to meet Him," said Guy, in a hushed tone, gazing at his handiwork with loving eyes.

"And he says I'm not ready," pouted Berry.

"And are you ready, Guy?" There was amusement about Mrs. Forrester's lips, and yet a very softened, wistful look in her eyes; but the question was too much for Guy's sensitive feelings. He seized hold of his picture and ran out of the room, whilst Berry gazed after him regretfully.

"He's so shy, poor boy," she said in a little old womanish tone that she sometimes adopted; "but he's very unkind to me sometimes, because he wouldn't never draw so many fine pictures if I didn't tell him how to make them!"

Then climbing into Mrs. Forrester's lap, she said,—

"Which do you like the best—Guy or me?"

"I like you both the same."

"That's what everybody always says—at least Thomas doesn't like us at all. I know he doesn't, and I don't think he likes you much either, for he was telling Matty this morn-



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ing something in the Bible about you; it was something about dress I didn't understand, and the way you do your hair."

Mrs. Forrester laughed, then said quietly, "You need not tell me what is said in the kitchen, Berry, any more than you need tell in the kitchen what is said in the dining-room."

Berry raised a puzzled face. "I don't understand," she said.

Mrs. Forrester did not explain, and Berry continued, "When I grow up I shall help Guy like you help father; Guy is very slow sometimes, and I make him be quick. Do you think if I grow very much taller than Guy that I shall be able to make him do what I tell him?"

"Are you born to conquer, Berry?" and Mrs. Forrester's clear laugh rang out. "It isn't height that wins the day, little woman, and I think you will get through the world best if you let men manage you."

"I like to be mistress," Berry responded, emphatically, "and I shall be one day."

"Well, you must run away now, for here comes dinner," and Berry instantly disappeared.

The independence of the twins was a great puzzle to their stepmother; she felt they needed a tighter rein over them, and yet dreaded a conflict with them. She came upon them in their bedroom one afternoon, Berry standing by the window submitting herself entirely to the hands of her brother, who, with a large pair of scissors, was chopping away at her curls in a leisurely manner.

"Oh, children, what are you doing?" Mrs. Forrester exclaimed.

"He's only cutting my hair," said Berry, calmly, "and then I'm going to do his; we always cut our hair when it tickles our eyes!"

"But you are making yourselves such objects! I really cannot allow it, and I think your hair would look much better if we let it grow."

"It mustn't be longer than Guy's," was the decided reply.



Filling up the Picture

"We're twins, and I sha'n't have long hair if Guy doesn't. Go on, Guy, you've only done one side."

Mrs. Forrester quietly took the scissors into her own hand.

"I think I am a better hairdresser than Guy. Now let me see if I can't make you look more presentable."

Berry was a little awed by her stepmother's tone; but as soon as she was free she exclaimed: "You sha'n't cut Guy's hair; I'm going to do it!"

"Guy is not going to have his cut at all. I shall take him into the town to have it done properly as soon as I can manage it."

Berry stamped her little foot. "I *shall* cut his hair; I've been good all this time waiting to do it. Go away, mother-kin, we don't want you."

"Berry, I cannot allow you to speak to me like this. I am going to take Guy downstairs with me, and when you are sorry for speaking so rudely you can join us."

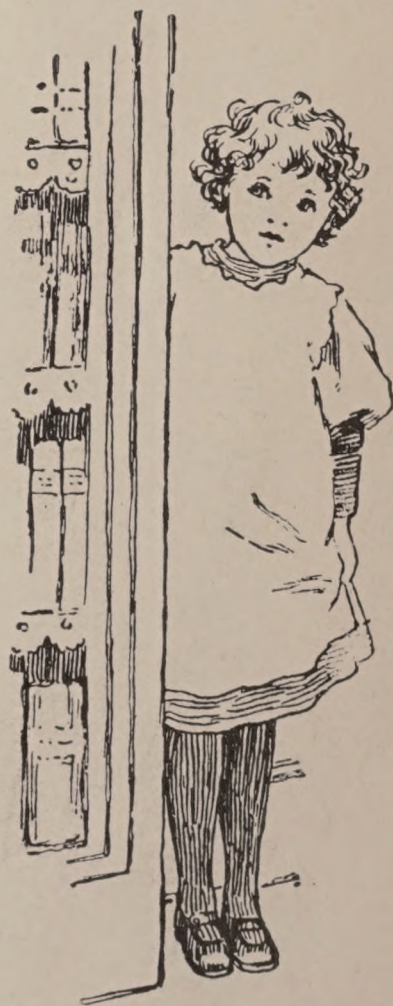
And to Berry's great astonishment Guy was led out of the room and she was left alone.

For a few minutes she stood looking out of the window, her little breast heaving with angry emotions which eventually found their outlet in a flood of tears, and throwing herself on the floor, Berry sobbed and kicked her temper away. No one came near her, and half an hour's solitude was quite long enough to bring the little maiden to her senses. With tear-stained cheeks she crept downstairs to the morning-room, where she found her stepmother busy writing and Guy occupied with a fairy book.

Mrs. Forrester looked up a little anxiously; but Berry's face was like a rainbow, her dimples and smiles shining through her grief.

"I'm sorry," she said, running toward her and holding her face up to be kissed, "and I want Guy to play hide-and-seek, upstairs!"

Mrs. Forrester smiled as she kissed the child. "That is right, Berry; I know you did not mean to be naughty. Now, run along, both of you, and have a good romp before tea."



A Puzzling Pair

"Guy," said Berry, later, when, tired out with play, they were resting by the dining-room fire, "do you like mother-kin? Because she makes us obey her just like father does!"

"Yes, I know she does."

"But I feel I shall be naughty very often if she won't let me do things."

"I shall try and be good," said Guy, thoughtfully, "because God wants me to, and I'm one of His servants now."

"I'm not," and Berry's tone was sorrowful; "if Jesus had come this afternoon when I was kicking, He wouldn't have found me ready."

"It will be *awful* if you aren't ready," Guy said, emphatically.

"Well, but you see I know He won't come in the daytime, because it says, 'like a thief in the night,' and I'm always good when I'm in bed, so I think He will find me good."

"That isn't being properly ready, though," objected Guy, "and God remembers the bad things you've done in the daytime."

"Well," argued Berry, "I'm not so bad as that servant in the chapter who was hitting everybody and getting drunk."

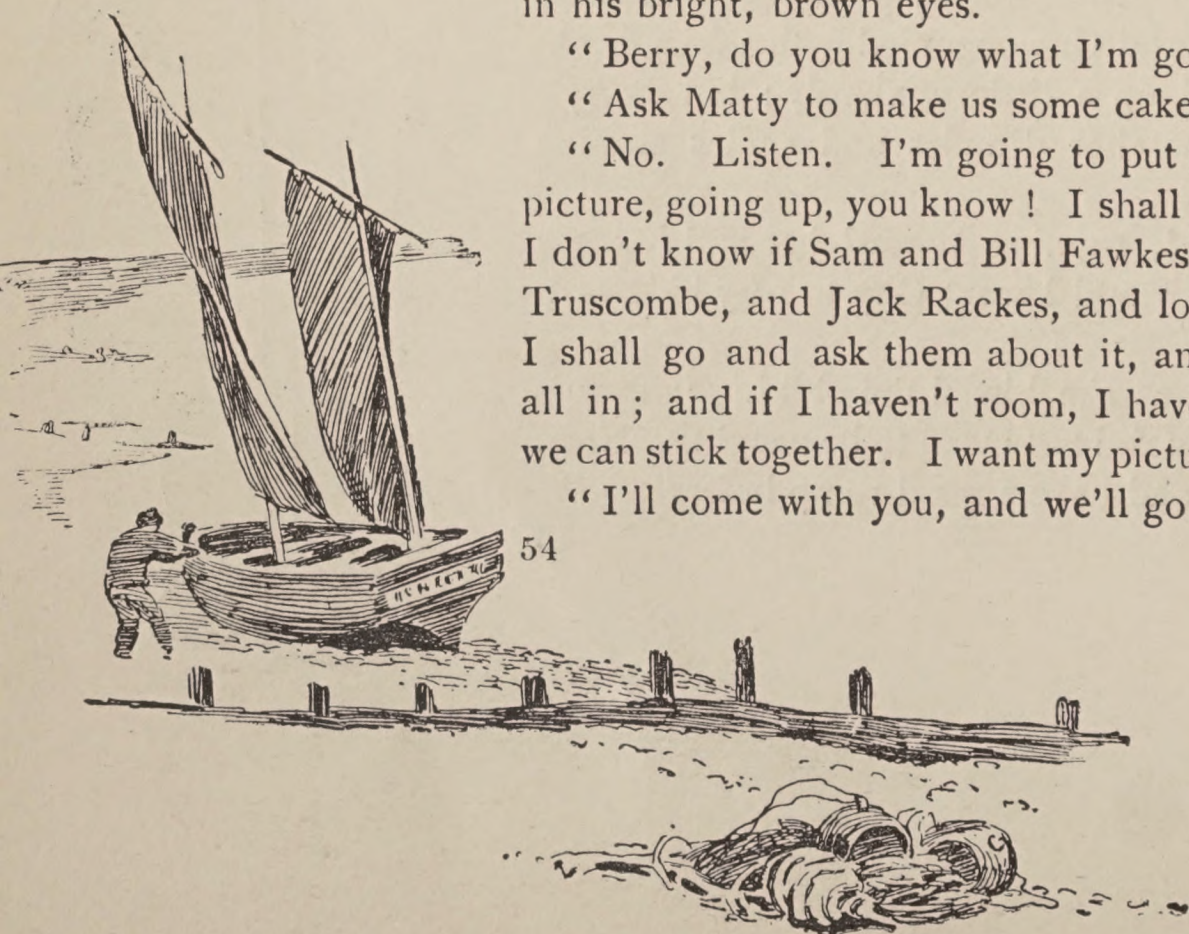
Guy was silent for some minutes. He was standing with his hands in his pockets gazing into the fire, and then he suddenly turned his face toward his sister with eager resolve in his bright, brown eyes.

"Berry, do you know what I'm going to do? Guess."

"Ask Matty to make us some cakes for tea?"

"No. Listen. I'm going to put a lot more people in my picture, going up, you know! I shall put Joe Tucker in; but I don't know if Sam and Bill Fawkes are ready, and old Mrs. Truscombe, and Jack Rackes, and lots of the fishermen, and I shall go and ask them about it, and then I shall put them all in; and if I haven't room, I have another sheet of paper we can stick together. I want my picture to be a very big one."

"I'll come with you, and we'll go to-morrow morning."



Filling up the Picture

And the next morning, after lessons were over, the twins set out on their expedition.

The first person they met was Bill Fawkes, busy drying his fishing nets. He and his brother Sam occasionally came to Thomas' meeting, and they were owners of a fine fishing smack, in which more than once the children had been taken out to sea. Bill looked up with a cheery smile as they approached him.

"Nice day, little master! Do you want a sail?"

"No," said Guy; "I want to talk to you."

"It's business," put in Berry, eagerly, "and it's about Guy's picture."

"You see," explained Guy, with a warning nudge to his sister, "I'm drawing a very big picture, and it's going to be quite a true one, so I don't want any mistakes. It's a very grave picture, Bill, a Sunday one, and I should like to put you in it."

"Harken to 'un now!" and Bill stuck his hands in his pockets, with a broad grin at the boy. "And wu'll a' be havin' my picture painted?"

"It's a picture of Jesus coming down from the sky with all His angels," Berry said; "and Guy wants to make all the people who are ready going up to meet Him."

Bill scratched his head, and looked fairly puzzled.

"You know," went on Guy, with animation, "that He might come any day now. He may be here to-night, and I'm drawing it. May I put you in? That's what I came to ask you."

"But that be a terrible day for the likes o' we," said Bill, dejectedly. "Ay, little master, 'tis not a subjec' to be drawed about."

"Won't you like Him to come?" inquired Guy. "I shall!"

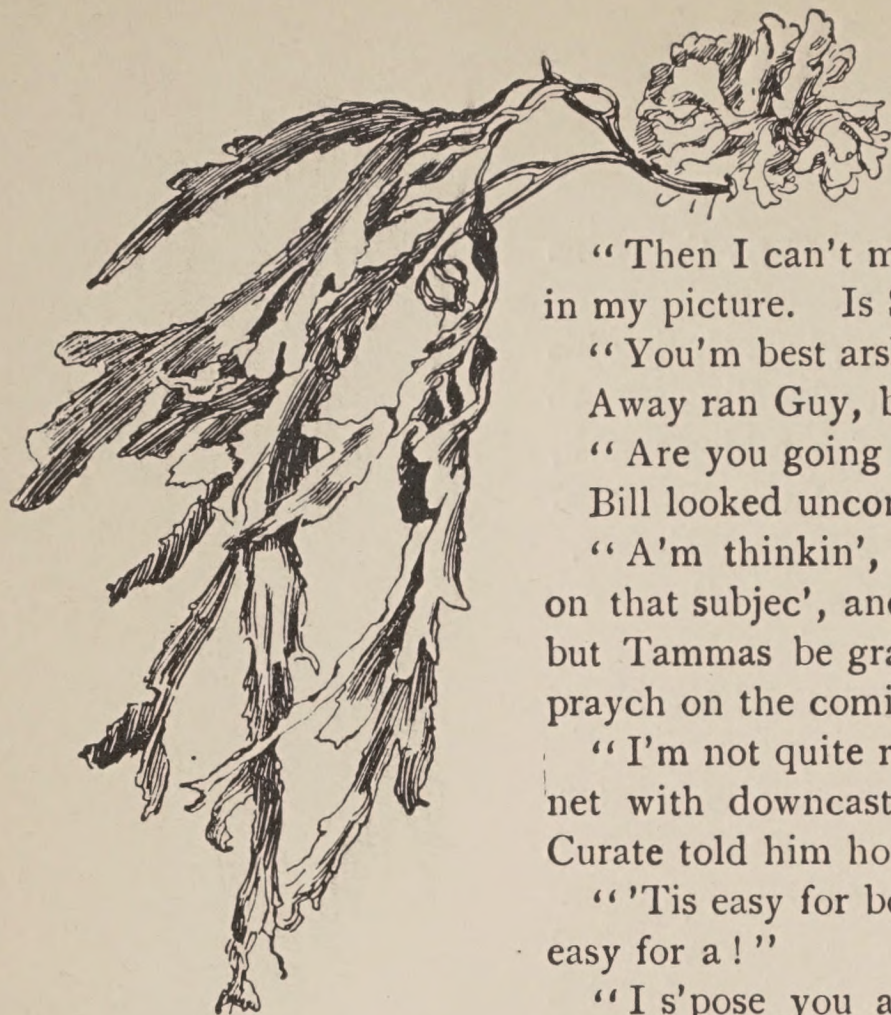
"Noa, a'm certain sure a'd rather He'd stop away altogether," was the decided response.

"Well, but you can't stop Him coming. He may be here very soon. Aren't you ready?"

"Noa, a can't say a'm that."

Guy looked disappointed.





A Puzzling Pair

"Then I can't make you going up in the sky to meet Him in my picture. Is Sam ready?"

"You'm best arsk 'im. Sam be in the hoose up yon." Away ran Guy, but Berry lingered.

"Are you going to get ready for Jesus, Bill?"

Bill looked uncomfortable.

"A'm thinkin', missy. Old Joe Tucker be mighty brave on that subjec', and a've a heerd old Tammas holdin' forth, but Tammas be gran' on fire and wrath; a've not heerd 'un praych on the comin' in the sky!"

"I'm not quite ready myself," Berry said, fingering Bill's net with downcast eyes; "but Guy has got ready; Mr. Curate told him how to."

"'Tis easy for both o' ye, but a'm thinkin' 'twill not be so easy for a!"

"I s'pose you and I are like the wicked servant in the chapter. There were two of them, and one was blessed, and the other cut in sunder. Do you drink with the drunken, Bill? That's what the wicked servant did. I can't understand who I am, because I'm not quite as wicked as him, and I'm not so good as the good one. Don't you think there may be some half between?"

Bill did not answer; he worked away with his net. Presently he said reflectively,—

"A do spend a deal o' my time in the Red Rose yon, but a dotee not drink like old Watty Pickers."

Berry was intent upon picking out some brown seaweed from the meshes of the net.

"Look, Bill, here's some lovely poppers! Hear me crack them! Wouldn't you like to be a fish sometimes? I should; I should like to go right to the bottom of the sea. Wouldn't it be a deep hole if the sea was taken out? I wonder if God dug it Himself before He put the water in?"

Bill shook his head doubtfully. Berry continued in her rambling fashion, "Do you know we've got a mistress at

Filling up the Picture

home? Father brought her back one day, and she's our stepmother. She is teaching me to write, and I do lessons. When I know how to write properly, I shall write books like father, and Guy will make the pictures."

"Ay, ye be two clever little 'uns!"

"I shall write," continued Berry, looking up at Bill's stolid face with twinkling eyes, "about a little crab in a pool, and how he went for a ride on a starfish to the bottom of the sea, and when he got there, he had jam tarts to eat, and then an earthquake came along and shook him up to the top of the sea again, and a big giant called Bill caught him in his net and took him to the Red Rose, and dropped him in some cider, and then he drank him down his throat, and he choked and died dead right off, and that's the end of my story."

Here Berry folded her hands primly in front of her, adding, "And poor Bill was buried"—

"Ay, missy, put a clapper to ye tongue; 'tis fearsome to hear ye!" And Bill looked fearfully round. "'Twas but last night a dreamed o' the old boat turnin' to a coffin, and a quaked to my boots, and now ye'll both be tellin' a that a'm not ready to die. And a'm a goin' to get ready some o' these days, a surely be!"

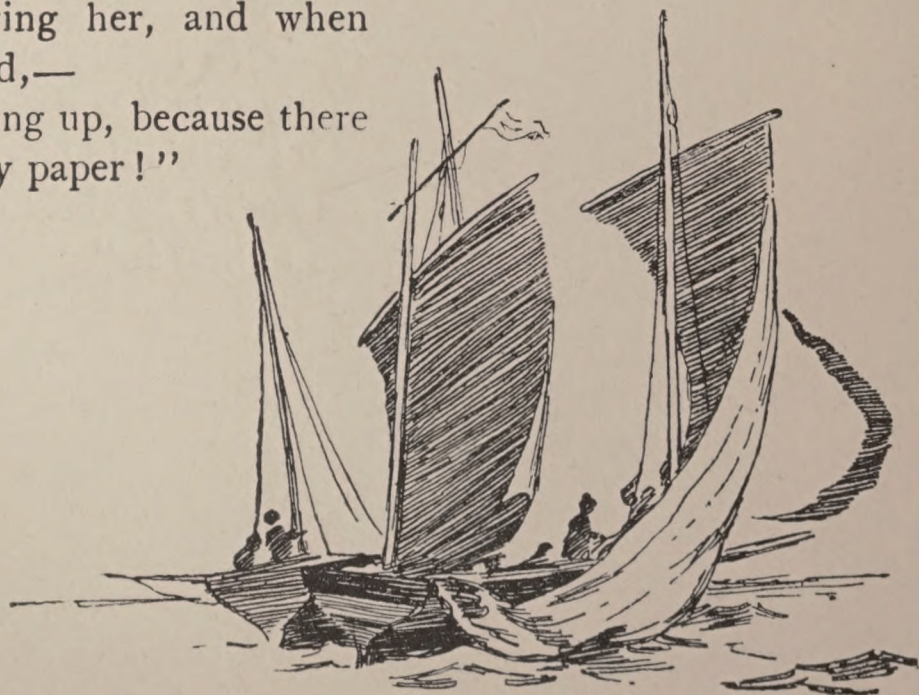
Their conversation came to an end here, for Guy returned.

"I've seen Sam, and he says I mustn't put him in my picture. Come on to Mrs. Blake, Berry; we'll ask her!"

An hour after the twins returned to the house rather crest-fallen. They had been laughed at by some of the fisher folk; some refused to answer their questions, and only one old woman had told them to put her in the picture.

But Guy consoled himself by drawing her, and when Berry criticised the size of her, he argued,—

"I'm going to make them bigger going up, because there are so few of them, and I must fill up my paper!"





Chapter VII

THE STORM

MRS. FORRESTER certainly had the knack of making the home comfortable. The children insensibly began to feel the difference, and the bare, dismantled rooms were improved so much by curtains, thick rugs, and pretty knickknacks, that they seemed hardly the same places.

But outside the old manor house the violent winds and winter storms worked great havoc in the old walls. Mr. Forrester was always talking of starting the masons at work, but his wife could not get him to act in the matter.

And then one night a most awful storm swept along the coast. All day the wind had shrieked through the old trees, and the waves had dashed against the terrace wall with increasing fury; but toward evening the gale became a perfect hurricane. Guy and Berry lay wakeful in their beds; they were too fond of wind and waves to be frightened; but accustomed as they were to storms, this seemed a more severe one than they had yet experienced.

"It's awful noisy, Guy," said Berry, raising herself on her elbow to listen; "I think the house will shake down soon, Matty says it will some day."

"I'm thinking," responded Guy, "if Jesus comes to-night, we sha'n't be able to hear His trumpet. It would be dreadful not to hear it."

The Storm

“Yes ; and—and—how wet all the angels and people will get coming down in the rain. Oh dear, I wish—I wish I was quite ready.”

“I expect,” Guy continued, “that the wind and rain will stop directly Jesus comes. The storm always stopped when He was on the sea. He will say, ‘Peace, be still’ again ! Oh, I wish He would come now.”

There was a sudden lull ; and so much was Guy’s mind on the advent of the Lord, that he dashed out of his bed and rushed to the window, quite expecting to see the glorious host he had so often pictured in his mind.

Berry, in the stillness that followed, pulled the clothes over her head, repeating to herself, “I’m not ready—I’m not ready, I shall be cut in sunder !”

And for some minutes nothing broke the silence, until, with a louder shriek and a fresh onslaught, the wind and waves commenced their mad orgie once more.

Then there was a gasping cry from Guy.

“He is coming, Berry ;” and then, after some minutes, a long-drawn sigh of disappointment,—

“No, He isn’t, it’s all a mistake !”

Berry took courage to put her head above the clothes.

“Is it quite safe, Guy ? You’re sure He won’t be here to-night.”

“I don’t know,” Guy said, pattering across the floor to her bed with his bare feet ; “but, Berry, there’s fireworks on the sea ; I saw a shooting light, and I did think it was the sky opening to let Jesus through. I opened the window, and I was just getting ready to go up when it went out, and I heard the sound of a booming gun, and then I saw it was fireworks.”

In an instant Berry was out of bed.

“Let me see ! It’s a ship, Guy, it’s a wreck, like the one last winter !”

“Yes,” said Guy, his eyes lighting up at the thought ; “and they’re wanting to be helped, and Cap’n Pike and Joe



A Puzzling Pair

Tucker and all of them will be going out in the lifeboat, and I'm going to run and tell father ! ”

He darted out of the room, Berry following, and the little white-robed figures flitted down the stone stairs, without a thought of cold or darkness, into the morning-room where their father and stepmother now sat after dinner.

They found them by the fire, she in the undignified position of sitting on the hearthrug, her head against her husband's knee.

Both started when the door opened, and the little people appeared.

“What is the matter, children ; is the storm frightening you ? ” exclaimed Mrs. Forrester.

“It's a ship, father ; they're letting off fireworks.”

Mr. Forrester had lived too long by the sea to be indifferent to this statement. In an instant he was on his feet, peering through the casement windows.

“Yes, I see it ; and it is driving straight this way on to the rocks. I must be off this instant. I expect the lifeboat will be needed.”

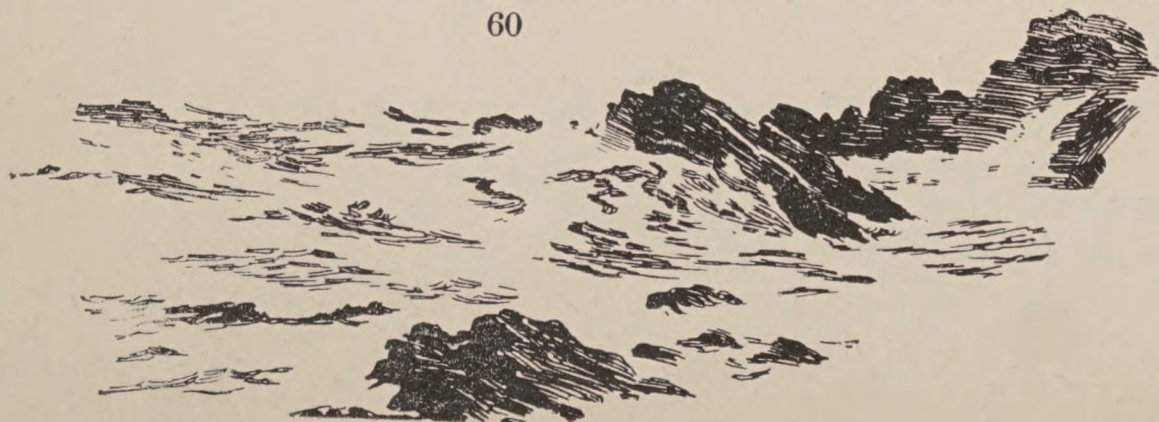
He dashed out of the room, whilst his wife gazed at him in surprise. She did not know anything would so shake her husband's usual equanimity, and hasten his leisurely movements. A moment after, and Matty came hurriedly in.

“'Tis a ship in distress, mum ; will you'm be coming down to the terrace to see it ? Tummas have run down, and the master be off to the lifeboat.”

“Oh, let us come,” entreated the twins ; but Matty turned round indignantly.

“Lock 'em in, mum ; that be the way I does. They ought to be in they beds.”

“No, I won't lock them in,” said Mrs. Forrester, smiling ; “for if I told them to stay in bed, I should expect them to do so. I don't think I will venture out in this storm, Matty ; so don't wait for me. Come, children, I will take you up to bed again ; you will catch cold like this. Does father go out in the lifeboat ? ”



The Storm

Wrapping a shawl round Berry, Mrs. Forrester caught her up in her arms, and carried her upstairs.

Guy had already disappeared, and they found him tugging on his boots in a half-dressed state when they reached the bedroom.

"I'm going out after father," he gasped.

"No, you are not," was the quick, decided reply from his stepmother.

Guy looked up, rebellion dawning in his little resolute face. "I shall go out; I'm a boy, and all the men and boys turn out for a wreck."

"And I'm going, too," exclaimed Berry, wriggling out of bed, where Mrs. Forrester had deposited her.

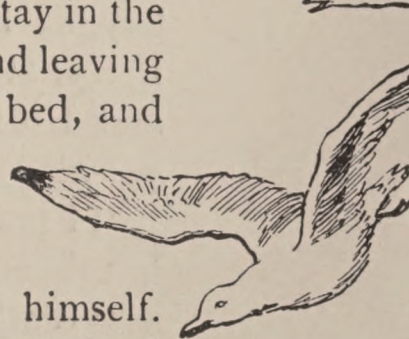
"Now, look here, children," and their stepmother spoke more sternly than they had ever heard her speak before; "I shouldn't think of allowing you to put your little heads outside the door on such a night as this. You would get blown away, perhaps blown over the terrace wall into the sea, and then what would father say when he came back? I want to go and see father very much, but I am choosing to stay in the house with you. I shouldn't dream of going out and leaving you here alone. Be good children and get into bed, and then I will tell what we will do."

Berry hesitated and looked across at Guy.

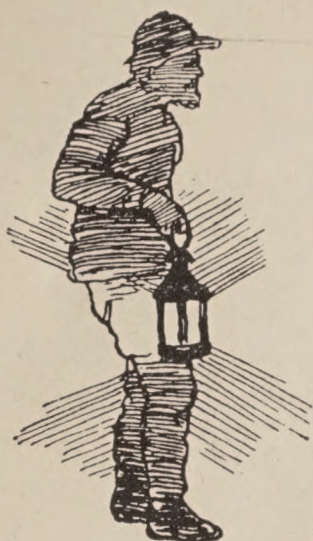
"Shall we do what she tells us?" she asked.

Poor little Guy was having a hard battle with himself. They had been so long uncontrolled that it seemed very hard to them to be checked so often as they were now; and the fact that Mrs. Forrester only ruled by moral force, and not, like Matty, with threats and sometimes blows, sorely tempted them to persist in their rebellion.

"Father would let me come," muttered Guy; and then he threw himself on his bed, and, burying his face in his pillow to stifle his disappointment and his tears, he sobbed out, "I don't believe you would let me go to meet Jesus when He comes, if it was a windy night!"



A Puzzling Pair



Mrs. Forrester appeared not to hear. She went on cheerfully,—

“I am going to light a fire here, and then I will wrap you up warmly, and we will all come and sit by the window for a short time and look out. We can see everything from here.”

In a very short time her intention was carried out, and the twins, more than half comforted, climbed up to the low, broad window-seat, and, bundled up in cloaks and dressing-gowns, kept an eager lookout.

“Does your father go in the lifeboat?” Mrs. Forrester asked again, anxiously.

“No, hardly ever; but he’s a kind of head captain over Cap’n Pike,” explained Guy.

“Look at the lanterns on the beach; and look, motherkin, there goes another firework! Oh, what a noise the wind is making!”

“And here is some one running up the garden. It’s Matty; doesn’t she look funny? the wind is blowing her all on one side.”

“I must go and see what is wanted. Now Guy, you are a boy, so I want you to promise me you will stay here with Berry, and neither of you leave the room. Take care of her, and I will come back to you as soon as I can. Can I trust you?”

“I promise,” said Guy, solemnly, and then Mrs. Forrester left them.

“It’s very nice having a fire, isn’t it, Guy?” said Berry, looking round the room, and up at the ceiling, where the flickering flames threw all kinds of queer shadows. “Motherkin likes fires as much as we do; we’ve had one here twice now.”

Guy did not reply; he was flattening his nose against the window-pane. “Hurray! I see the lifeboat; hark at the cheers!” And he and Berry shouted till their throats were hoarse.

“Oh, I do wish I was out; it is a shame!”

“Let’s run downstairs, quick,” suggested Berry; but Guy shook his head.

“I promised, and I’ll die before I break a promise!”

The Storm

"Wouldn't you run away if this room caught fire, or the ceiling tumbled down upon us?"

"You're always s'posing things that wouldn't happen."

Guy's tone was slightly scornful, and Berry resented it at once. "You're very grand, because motherkin told you to stay and take care of me; but you never do take care of me. If Jesus had come just now, you would have gone up in the air and left me behind. You wouldn't have cared a bit!"

"Well, I couldn't have stopped behind. You've only got to get ready, and then you would come with me. It would be just like the chapter says, 'One shall be taken and the other left'; but it's all your own fault."

Berry heaved a sigh, then she said, "I said my prayers under the clothes and I asked Him not to come to-night, and you see He hasn't."

"And I was asking Him, as hard as I could, to come," said Guy, bringing his gaze back from out of the window to his sister's face, with a puzzled stare; "it's a very wrong thing to pray opposite, I'm sure."

"Why?"

"Because—well because it must make it differcult for God."

"Nothing's differcult for God, you know it isn't, Matty is always telling us so. And I 'spect God answers the one He likes best, and He answered my prayer to-night—not yours."

Guy was silent, then he said, after some deep thought,—

"What a *very* good thing He did answer you. Where would you be now, if Jesus had come?"

Berry's eyes grew very round, and the corners of her lips began to droop.

"I don't know how to get ready more than I'm doing, I'm trying to be good, and I watch for Him coming quite as much as you do."

Tears began to gather in her brown eyes, and she went on,—

"I was dreffully frightened to-night, I really thought I was going to be left behind, and my inside thumped up and down,



A Puzzling Pair

and my teeth were rattling. I do want to get ready, Guy, tell me how you did it."

Two small hands clutched hold of the shawl in which he was bundled up, but Guy hung his head, and if there had been more light in the room Berry would have seen his cheeks become hot and red.

"I don't talk about it," he said, slowly; "I think it's what father calls 'private business,' and I can't tell you how I did it eggsackly."

"I don't believe you're more ready than me," said Berry, with a sob in her voice.

"It's only,"—stammered Guy, feeling he must comfort his sister, "to tell God about yourself, and ask Him to give you your pardon that Jesus got for you. Mr. Curate told us. Don't you remember?"

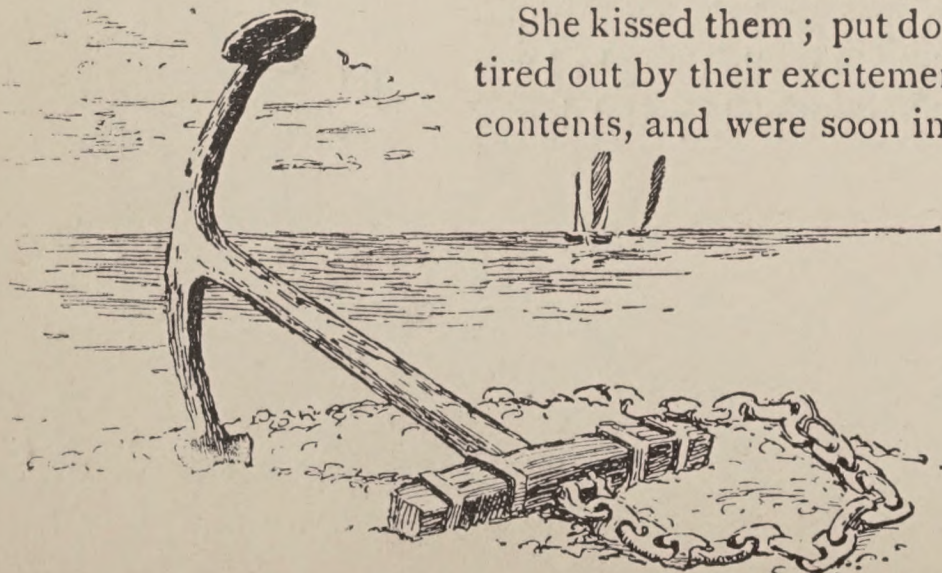
"But how do you know God has given it to you?"

"Mr. Curate said, 'God never punishes twice.' So I say that over to myself when I'm not quite sure. For I'm *quite* sure Jesus was punished. He came from heaven on purpose."

There was silence. Berry appeared to be considering, but her volatile little mind was distracted by the sight of another rocket, and she turned to the window with fresh zest. And then through the gloom they saw at length the lifeboat coming back, and there seemed to be a great commotion on the beach. A short time after, a little group of people came up the garden, and then ensued a great bustle in the house downstairs. Finally, Mrs. Forrester opened the door.

"Good children," she said, with a bright smile; "I have brought you a basin of hot bread and milk between you, and then you must scramble into bed and go to sleep. I cannot stay a minute, but father is back, and all the crew have been saved. We will hear all about it to-morrow."

She kissed them; put down her basin, and disappeared; and tired out by their excitement, the twins quickly demolished the contents, and were soon in the deep sweet sleep of childhood.



Chapter VIII

THE STRANGER

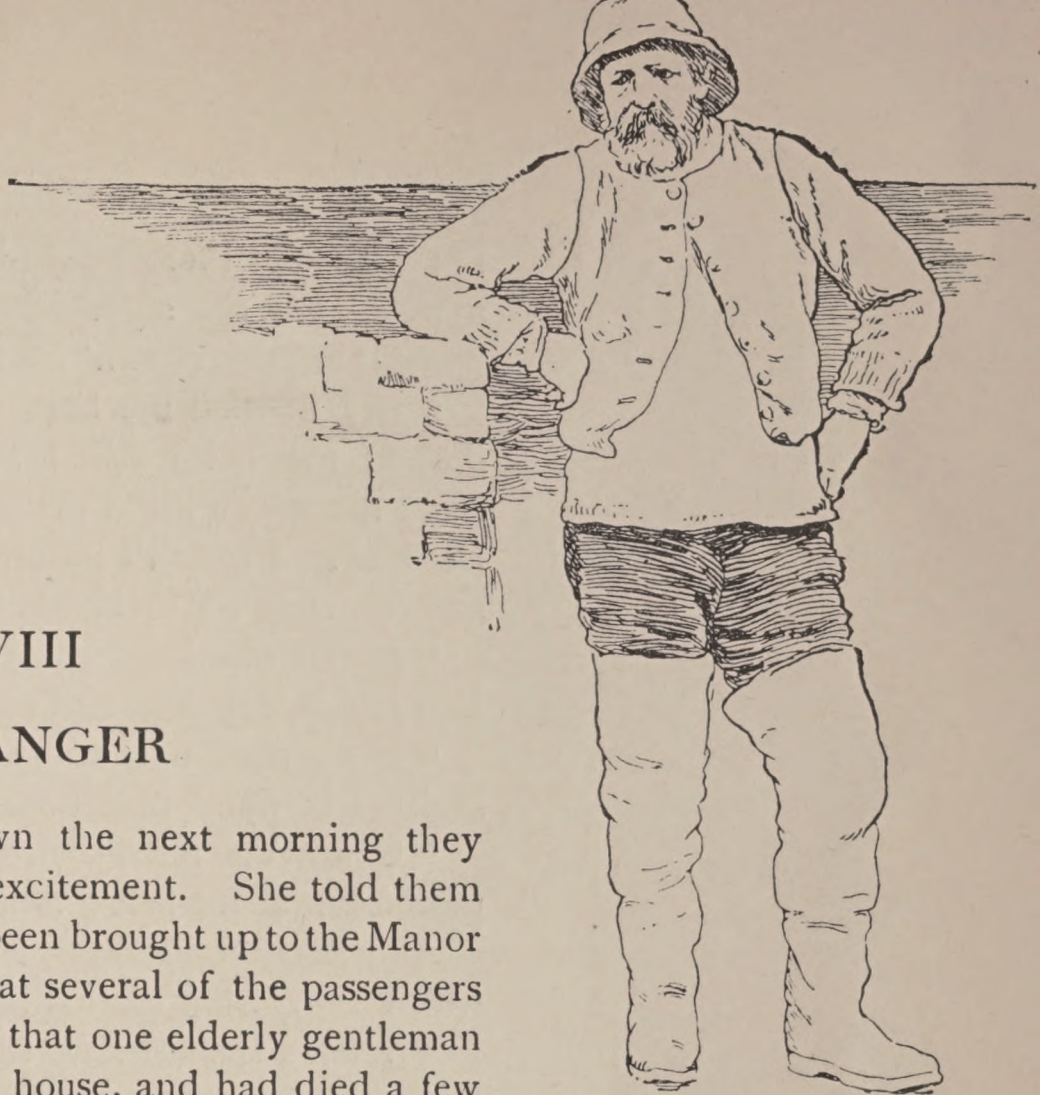
WHEN the children came down the next morning they found Matty in a great state of excitement. She told them that an old lady and her maid had been brought up to the Manor House late the previous night; that several of the passengers were put up in the village, and that one elderly gentleman had been taken into Bill Fawkes' house, and had died a few hours after, from exhaustion and fright. Bill was himself at the back door now, talking to Thomas about it. Guy and Berry darted out to him.

"Do tell us about the ship, Bill," Guy cried; "were you in the lifeboat? And how did the people get into it? Do tell us everything."

"Ah! little master, 'twas a fearful night! A had a sign; a telled the little maid, when hur were a-chatting to a tother morn. A didn't dream my boat were turned to a coffin for no purpose, and 'tis a death to our hoose, surely! And such a likely old gent, too, but he were prepared for his end, he folded his two hands together, and sez he, when we laid 'im on the bed, 'Lord Jesus receive my spirit,' and never a word or more after—he went wonderful easy."

"Ah!" sighed Matty, behind the children; "'twill be sad for his family."

"Ay, there be a nevvie o' hisn, and he be seein' about 'im,



A Puzzling Pair

but a knowed there would be somethin' awesome this week—a were zent the sign. And how be thy old lady? she were powerful active comin' off the boat."

Matty nodded her head up and down. "She do be wonderful; her maid telled me just now she have slept like a child the whole night through, and be wantin' a hearty breakfast now. I mustn't bide here, for there be a lot to see after, and 'tis close on breakfast time."

"Is the old lady going to stay with us, Matty?" asked Berry. "May I go and see her?"

"For certain not, and ye'll have to hush your voices a bit, and not be flyin' round and bangin' doors all the morn."

"Come on into the dining-room, Guy, and we'll ask motherkin about her. Matty is in one of her fustles!"

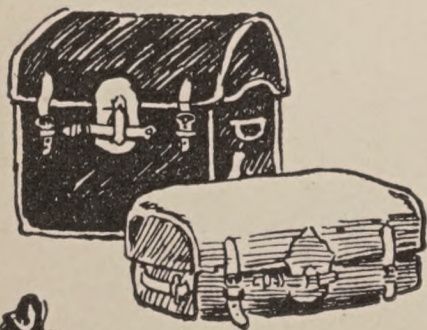
And Berry danced off, running into the arms of her father, who was crossing the hall.

"What's the old lady called, father? May Guy and I go and wish her good-morning? Was she nearly drowned?"

But Berry's curiosity was again quenched, and she was told to come into breakfast and be quiet.

Mrs. Forrester seemed a little disturbed at the advent of her guest. "I have made her as comfortable as I can," she said to her husband, "but she is complaining a great deal of the cold and draftiness of her bedroom, and indeed, I do not wonder. I have told her she must rest here for a few days, and she seems quite inclined to—says she couldn't possibly travel for a week at least, after such an experience, and has sent her maid off now to find out how much of her luggage was saved."

Mr. Forrester laughed. "Well, I suppose a woman's luggage is very dear to her heart, and I hope she may recover it. The boat is on the rocks, and the captain hopes to save all the salvage. I have promised to go down and give a helping hand this morning. One thing we can be thankful for, and that is that our guest is in such good health. I've heard this morning that one passenger has died."



The Stranger

Mrs. Forrester shivered. "Yes; Matty was telling me—it is a mercy all were saved as they were."

"But the old gentleman has gone to heaven, hasn't he?" put in Berry, with large eyes. "Bill Fawkes told us his prayer."

"Where do these small people get their religion from, Warwick?" asked Mrs. Forrester, with a laughing shrug of her shoulders. "Heaven—and—well, the other place are continually upon their lips—it's not natural!"

"Very natural to them; they pick up phrases here and there and invent the rest," Mr. Forrester said, carelessly. Then he added with his dry humor, "Attend a few of our kitchen meetings on Sunday afternoons, my dear, and you will not wonder, after such training, at their theology."

"I have a great wish to attend," Mrs. Forrester returned, "but I'm afraid Thomas would so improve the occasion that I should never dare to give him an order afterward." Then meeting Guy's earnest gaze, she added, "But he is a good, faithful servant, and I respect him immensely. And perhaps he may be more enlightened than I am on many points."

A little sigh followed her words, and then she changed the subject. Guy and Berry were very delighted when, early in the afternoon, they were called to the spare bedroom door by a strange woman.

"My mistress heard your voice and would like to see you." Berry pressed eagerly in and Guy followed, his curiosity having got the better of his shyness.

Sitting in an easy chair by the fire, enveloped in a crimson silk dressing gown, was a most imposing looking old lady. Her white hair was rolled off her forehead under a wonderful erection of lace and ribbon, her dark eyes looked as bright and eager as a child's, whilst she sat as erect as if only twenty instead of seventy-five years had been her portion in this life.

"Come here," she said, briskly; "don't be afraid of an old woman like me. In this desolate house it is refreshing to hear children's voices. Now take a seat and talk to me."



A Puzzling Pair



Berry's eyes glistened at this request.

"We love to talk," she said; "but most of the grown-up people we know tell us to be quiet because we talk too much. Guy and me have been wanting to see you all day. Weren't you very frightened last night?"

"My dear little girl, my maid over there would tell you that Miss Marchmount is afraid of nothing and nobody. If you have travelled as much as I have, you would feel the same. This is not the first gale that I have encountered."

"Do you live on the sea like the sailors?" questioned Guy.

"I can't say I do, though when I was a little girl I always said I would like to be a sailor. No; I live in a sleepy little town with my brother, a clergyman, who thinks there is no place like it, and when I have got weary of our quiet old cloisters I pack my trunks, and cross the ocean with my maid, to inhale fresh ideas, and keep myself from vegetating. There now, have I satisfied your curiosity? I always heard that children were the most curious set of creatures on the face of the earth. Perhaps, instead of catechising me, you will give me some information about yourselves. Have you spent all your small lives in this tumble-down building?"

"O' course we have," Berry responded, quickly; "this is the Manor House, and it's very big, and when Guy and I grow up we mean to have a lot of new things in it. You see, Guy is going to paint pictures and I shall help him. And he is going to be master here one day, and I shall be mistress."

"Yes," put in Guy, earnestly, "and I shall give my orders then to Thomas and Matty, and they will have to do what I tell them."

"Who are they?" inquired the old lady.

"Well," said Berry, dubiously, "they're really servants, you know, only they're very grand when they talk to us, and Thomas doesn't think nothing of us at all. He says we're wicked good-for-nothings, and children of wrath and disobedience, and he calls us all kinds of names out of the Bible!"

The Stranger

"And Matty likes to lock us up to keep us out of mischief," added Guy. "She wanted to last night, only motherkin wouldn't let her. Do you know her? She is father's new wife, and hasn't been with us very long, but she's very kind to Berry and me."

So they chattered on, and Miss Marchmount was highly diverted by their conversation, and gave them wonderful accounts of the countries she had been to. She did not leave her room for the next few days, and insisted that the children should come to her every afternoon to amuse her; and it was not long before Guy's picture was brought out for her inspection.

"I should like to put you in," said Guy, a little nervously. "I think I could draw you."

"There's nobody and nothing that Guy can't draw," observed Berry, proudly. "Father thought he couldn't draw the battle of Waterloo, but he did, and father gave him sixpence for it."

"Why do you want to put me in?" asked Miss Marchmount.

"To fill up my paper," was the quick reply; "I'm only putting the people that will be ready when Jesus comes, and I haven't got many. You see there aren't a lot of people living near us, and some of them say they don't want to be put in, they don't feel ready enough."

"Perhaps I don't feel ready enough," said Miss Marchmount, with twinkling eyes. "How must I feel? Tell me."

Guy's grave eyes lifted to hers abashed her slightly.

"You're an old-fashioned little couple," she said, laughing. "Take your picture away; it's a very grand one, and you've got hold of a grand subject. But I think you can fill it in without putting me into it."

Guy rolled up his picture carefully.

"Have you ever been taught drawing?" she asked. Guy shook his head. "Ah, well—perhaps it is as well; artists are generally ne'er-do-weels—a dreamy, idle set. If you



A Puzzling Pair



were my boy, I would take pencils and paper away from you, and turn you out of doors to play."

"But I can draw out of doors," said Guy.

"Yes, he can draw in a boat, or in our cave, or anywhere," put in Berry; "and motherkin says we've played too much, and ought to be learning lessons. Are you fond of playing?"

"Some kinds of play interest me," Miss Marchmount responded, drily.

"Yes, that's just like Guy and me. We don't care for whipping tops, and hoops, and hopscotch like the village children play, but we love hide-and-seek, and building sand castles, and being cast on a desert island, and there's a play of our own we'll tell you if you promise never, never to tell it to any one!"

Miss Marchmount promised, but Guy seemed rather uneasy. "You won't tell anybody, will you?" he repeated, "because no one knows, it's quite our own secret."

Again assured, Berry began eagerly. "It's in the left wing, down the staircase and turn to the right and up a narrow passage—there's a room right at the end which father has locked up, because Thomas says that side of the house will tumble down one day, it's so old. And he lives in that room, old Taffyraggy is his name. He was put in prison there years ago, and we're the only people kind to him. We take him bits of cake, and slices of apple and talk to him through the keyhole. He talks back in a kind of low roar, and sometimes he asks for things we can't take him. He likes to read and we push bits of newspaper under the door. And sometimes he's ill, and we make him some bread pills with pepper if we can get it, and we tell him how to poultice himself. One day he says he is coming out, when he gets a letter from the Queen. If we don't go near him for a long time we get a letter from him, and sometimes he is angry and won't answer us, and we have to write him letters and ask him to forgive us. He always writes letters to me and Guy reads them for me. But of course it's a great secret and no one knows about him except us!"

The Stranger

Miss Marchmount generally accepted all the children's statements with the greatest composure, but she looked perfectly bewildered now.

"Who is it?" she demanded, "any one you know that comes to play with you there?"

Guy stepped up closer to her with a knowing smile.

"I'll tell you if you let me whisper;" and into her ear he continued. "It's only a game you see, and we make-believe about him. I write the letters and talk in a roar, I have to do both sides, but it's great fun sometimes."

"Yes," said Berry; "and Guy often draws Taffyraggy. We think he has a big hat and feather, and a velvet cloak and a white beard, and when father unlocks the door he will disappear because he won't be locked up any more, and we sha'n't ever see him or hear of him again. Then we shall have to get a new game."

"Well," said Miss Marchmount, "I dare say your mother is wise in making you work at your books if you both have such runaway imaginations. You were saying you would like to draw me, Guy, just now. If you will keep me out of that wonderful picture of yours, I will give you a commission for a portrait of me. Would you like to do it? I want to be very nicely drawn, so that every one who sees it may say 'What a beautiful old lady!'"

"I will do my very best," said Guy, proudly, not seeing the twinkle in Miss Marchmount's eyes.

He started the portrait then and there, and for three successive afternoons came and sat on a low stool in front of the old lady, and worked away with a will.

Berry had not the patience to stay still so long; she danced in and out of the room, and generally left the two alone for the latter part of the time, very grave discussions taking place between the young artist and his sitter.

"Must I put your wrinkles in?" asked Guy the last afternoon; "they're rather difficult to draw."



A Puzzling Pair

"Oh, put them in most certainly, and have you noticed I have lost two of my back teeth."

Miss Marchmount's dry jokes were entirely lost upon Guy, but she enjoyed them herself.

Her remark started a new train of thought to the boy.

"Do people have wrinkles in heaven? I haven't made any in my picture. And ought I to draw Noah and Moses and all the old men without any teeth? You see, I want my picture to be true."

"I think if I remember rightly everybody and everything will be made new."

"Then you'll get your two back teeth again?"

"If I am there."

Guy did not reply—he was struggling to depict the different rings on Miss Marchmount's fingers, and it wanted all his care and attention.

At length he heaved a sigh. "I really think I have finished you now. I could have done you better if I had been a man, but I think it's like you."

He brought his sketch up to Miss Marchmount, and she surveyed it with great gravity.

"I'm afraid I'm not as good-looking as I thought I was," she said, with a mock sigh.

"I think you're very pretty," said Guy, "but not so pretty as motherkin, your cheeks are not pink like hers."

"Very true, and that being the case, it is as well that I should be sketched in black and white. Now, what do you charge?"

"How do you mean?" asked bewildered Guy.

"Bless the boy! Don't you know if you take a person's portrait, you must be paid for it."

"Must I? But I never thought of that. I'm afraid I don't draw well enough to be paid."

"Well, I dare say we shall come to terms then. Leave me my portrait. When I wish to mortify the flesh I shall take it out, and it will remind me of what I am in the sight of youth."



The Stranger

"I should like to show it to Thomas and Matty, if you don't mind," said Guy, a little shyly.

"And pray, why is my portrait to be handed round in the kitchen?"

"Because they—well—they laughed when I told them I was taking your portrait, they wouldn't believe it, and Thomas said there's a better portrait of you in the Bible than ever I could make—I didn't quite understand him—he said it was in the third chapter of Romans. I hate to be laughed at!"

"Your old man here is the most insolent servant I ever came across!"

The smile and sparkle had vanished from Miss Marchmount's eyes, and an angry flush mounted in her thin old cheeks.

Guy looked at her a little frightened. She added,—

"No, if you take payment for my portrait, it must be under one condition, and that is, that it is my private property. It is too precious to be vaunted before the public, and not quite finished enough for the Academy."

Then taking her purse out, she twisted some money up in a piece of paper, and placed it in his hand.

"You must give me a proper receipt for it," she said.

Guy's eyes sparkled. "Tell me how."

"Take a piece of paper and write: 'Received the sum of one guinea for portrait in pencil of Alicia Marchmount,' put the date, and sign your name."

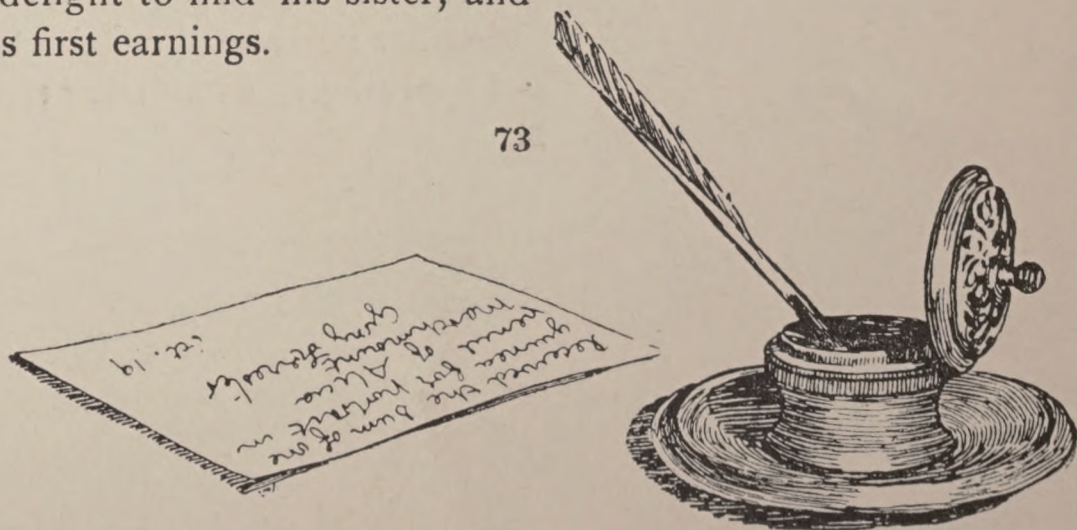
This took a long time, but it was done at last.

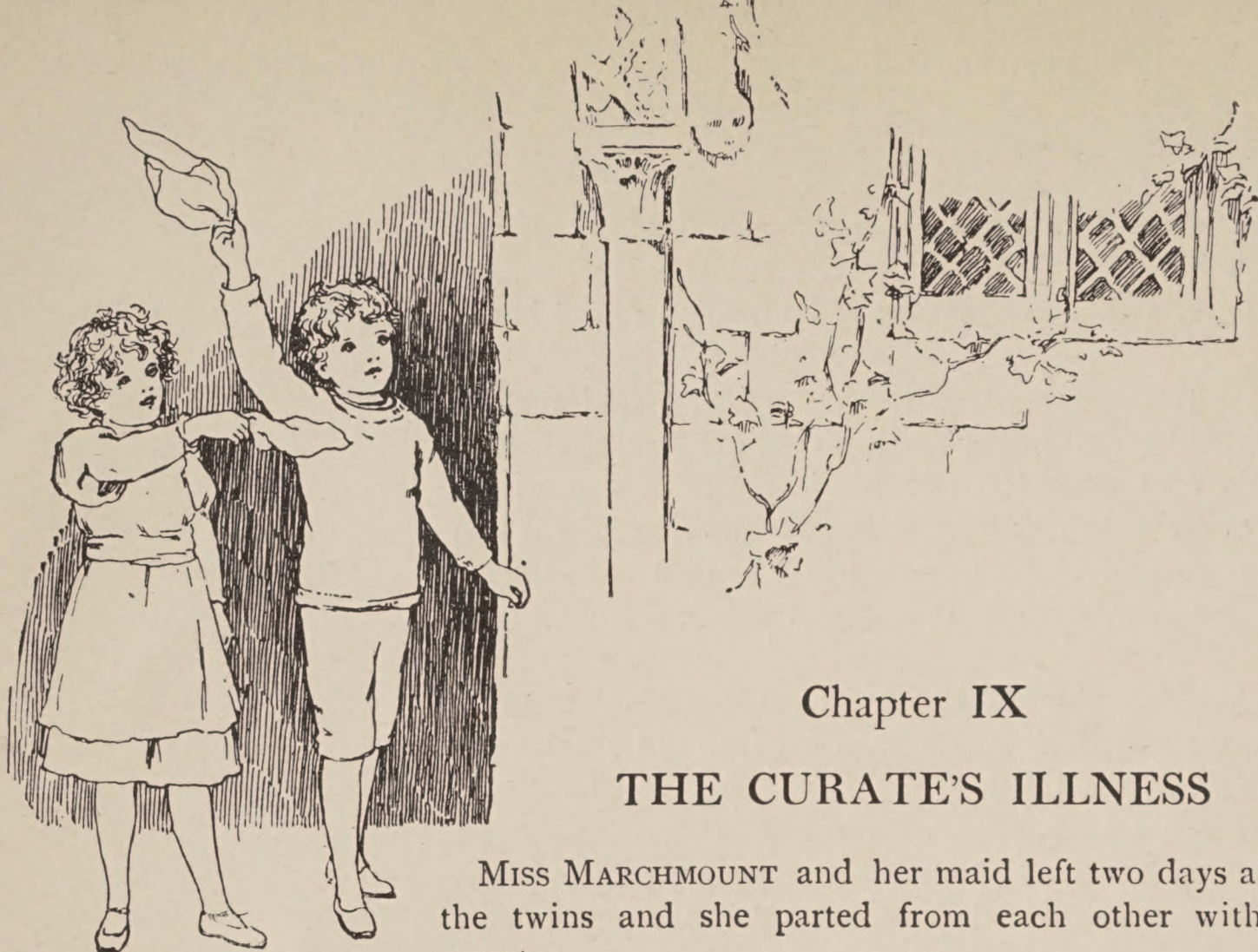
"Now make your bow and leave me."

"Let me kiss you instead."

"Scandalous! You will make my cheeks as pink as your mother's with such audacity!"

But the old lady received a hug with great equanimity, and folded up the sketch of herself with a smile and sigh, whilst Guy fled in trembling delight to find his sister, and show her in proud exultation his first earnings.





Chapter IX

THE CURATE'S ILLNESS

MISS MARCHMOUNT and her maid left two days after, and the twins and she parted from each other with mutual regret.

"I shall send you an invitation to come and see me soon in my own house," the old lady said, and Guy and Berry could hardly believe their ears.

"Good-bye," they shouted, as she rolled away from the door in the fly, "and when we grow up you shall come and stay with us!"

"Where are you going to live when you grow up?" asked their stepmother, laughing. "Will you turn father and me out of the house?"

The children pondered. "Don't you think you will be dead?" asked Guy, shyly; "it will be so many, many years before we're a man and a woman."

"You heartless little creatures, are you looking forward to that time?"

"It's very nice to be dead, motherkin, isn't it?" said Berry, laying her curly head coaxingly against her stepmother's arm, and speaking in comforting tones. "You see, you'll be up in

The Curate's Illness

heaven, won't you? And Guy and I will put flowers on your grave every Sunday, like Thomas's little nieces did on their mother when she died. Grown-up people can't live forever, can they?"

Mrs. Forrester gave a little shiver. "Oh, you children!" she said, "how dreadfully you talk! Death is not a subject for you: leave it alone."

"Of course," Guy put in, dreamily, as he looked up into the sky, "I'm hoping we'll all go up to heaven together. If Jesus comes soon, we shall."

"I think," said Berry, reflectively, "we had better ask Him not to come just yet till we've been to visit Miss Marchmount. And, besides, I'm not quite ready yet."

"Motherkin," said Guy, turning to his stepmother with furrows between his eyes, "what does God do when two people pray opposite things? I'm praying that Jesus may come at once, and Berry is praying Him not to."

"I think," said Mrs. Forrester, slowly, "that God answers prayer as He sees best." And then dreading to be brought further into a religious argument Mrs. Forrester moved away, and the twins dropped the subject.

Guy's guinea was a great difficulty to him, and many were the consultations the children had together of the most profitable way of spending it.

At last one morning after lessons they sallied toward the village with very important faces. And an hour after Mr. Grant met them returning, Guy grasping a small bag in his hands, and appearing from his hot, flushed face to find it very heavy.

"What have you got there?" asked the young curate.

"It's Guy's money," was Berry's proud reply.

"Has he had a hundred pounds left him?"

"No," said Guy, "but I've got two hundred and fifty-two pennies."

"He had a gold pound and a shilling, and we thought we



A Puzzling Pair

would like it in pennies best, so we've been to the shop to get it changed."

"You see," said Guy, sitting down on an old milestone by the road to rest himself, "I was afraid of losing it. I was playing with it in bed this morning when it rolled along the floor, and nearly went down a mouse hole."

"And where will you keep these pennies?"

"We're going to hide them somewhere. We sha'n't tell any one, but it will be a kind of game, and then whenever we want some money we shall dig it up."

Mr. Grant smiled. "Do some good with it, my boy," he said; "if you belong to God, your money belongs to Him, and He will expect you to make some one the better for it."

And then he strode away, leaving Guy thoughtful and ill at ease. He was very silent all that day. Even digging a hole in the innermost part of the cave out of reach of the tide did not brighten him up; and Berry more than once took him to task for his low spirits.

"What's the matter with you? You look quite cross, just like Thomas."

"I'm thinking," said Guy; and Berry could get nothing more out of him.

Early the next morning Guy rose without disturbing his sister, and crept out of the house down to the beach. He made his way to the cave, dug up his bag of coppers, and then turned into the stables, where he brought out his pony, and riding bare-back, galloped off, money in hand, to the vicarage.

"Is Mr. Curate at home?" he asked the old servant, breathlessly, when he got there.

"At home? Of course he is," was the snappish response; "and in bed with such a horful cold that I doubt him hever getting out again. He is a poor weakly young man with a cough going night and day, and I said when I first set heyes on him, that he weren't long for this world."



The Curate's Illness

"But won't he see me? Do ask him, for it's very special, indeed, it is!"

"Ah, well, come in; you allays did get your way with the vicar, and I won't be the one to shut you out."

A few minutes after, Guy was standing by Mr. Grant's bedside, looking with wonder and pity in his brown eyes on the thin feverish face of the young curate.

"Very glad to see you, my boy. Sit down; what is it you want?"

Mr. Grant spoke with difficulty, and Guy told him in hushed tones the object of his visit.

"I want to give my money to God, and I don't know how to do it, so I thought I would bring it to you, and let you do it for me."

Mr. Grant smiled. "Do you want to give it all to God?" he asked; "are you willing to do so?"

"Yes, that's why I've come this morning. I made up my mind last night after I went to bed."

"I wonder if you would like to send it to the heathen. Do you see my missionary box over there? I hoped once to go abroad amongst them myself, but that was denied me."

"I don't think I care about the heathen," said Guy, in a disappointed tone.

"You want the Lord to come quickly, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed I do."

"I can't help thinking He might have been here long ago if we had taken the Gospel to the heathen sooner. He is waiting for souls to be gathered in amongst the heathen. Of that I feel sure."

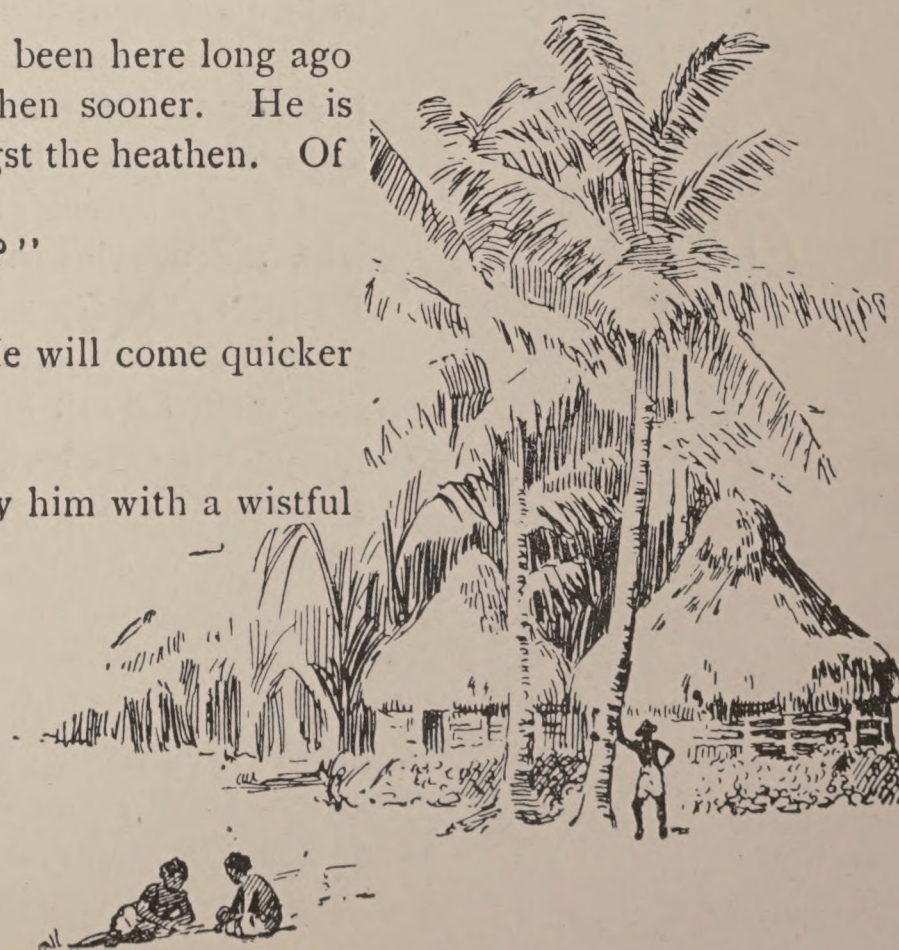
"And will this money help to do that?"

"Yes, indeed it will."

"Then I give it all. Do you think He will come quicker now?"

"I hope so; I am longing for it."

Mr. Grant gazed out of the window by him with a wistful



A Puzzling Pair

look in his sunken eyes. And Guy smiled contentedly as he deposited his heavy bag at the bottom of the bed.

"And will you send it to the heathen to-morrow? How will it help them to know about Jesus, Mr. Curate?"

"It will help to send a missionary out to them."

"I'm afraid Berry will be angry with me. I came off without telling her. We were going to have such fun digging the pennies up. I meant to take Matty down there and let her find a penny. She would have been pleased; but I shall be gladder if it may make Jesus come quicker!"

Mr. Grant here had a violent fit of coughing, and old Mrs. Gates appearing dismissed Guy at once.

He mounted his pony and rode home, but was reprimanded severely by his father for coming in so late to breakfast.

"You deserve to have it in the kitchen again; we have just finished. Where have you been?"

"To see Mr. Curate. He's very ill, father, and the doctor came to see him twice yesterday."

"Poor young fellow," said Mrs. Forrester, pityingly; "he looks wretchedly delicate. I think I shall go and see if he has all he wants."

Mr. Forrester laughed.

"I think you are never so happy as when you are looking after people's needs. But go by all means, and take him a little good nourishing food. He always looks half-starved."

Berry was burning with curiosity to know what had been her brother's errand; and she was quite as indignant and aggrieved as Guy had expected.

"Those horrid old heathen, they won't know what to do with the pennies when they get them. They'll eat them up I expect. Matty says they eat everything that comes near them, even boys and girls!"

"Well, I don't know how the money is going," was Guy's reply; "but God will see about it, for I've given it all to Him, and Mr. Curate says it may make Jesus come quicker!"



The Curate's Illness

Mrs. Forrester was as good as her word ; she not only went to see Mr. Grant, but took him beef tea and jelly made with her own hands, and she generally came home in subdued spirits.

"I don't believe he will ever get over it," she said to her husband ; "he told me his lungs have been affected for some time past, and I believe he is in a rapid decline. I have met very few really good people in my life, but he seems to be living on the threshold of heaven. Poor young fellow, he is quite alone in the world—an orphan—with no relatives, and he seems so very grateful for any attention."

Berry and Guy were greatly concerned about their friend's illness. They came home from church one Sunday almost in tears, after trying in vain to understand the rather lengthy sermon preached by a neighboring clergyman. And going into the kitchen after their early dinner to help to prepare for the meeting, they confided their woes to Thomas.

"No one will be so nice as Mr. Curate ; he always looks into our pew at the end of the sermon, and says something on purpose for us, and he always tells us something about Jesus coming again—no one else does."

"Ay," said Thomas, shaking his head, "I went once for to hear him, but there warn't much depth. He be but a boy, and how can he hold forth to edification to grey-haired saints who be on the mountain top?"

"I like his sermons better than yours," said Berry, a little saucily ; "you never tell us about Jesus coming again."

"And where would you be, you shameless young maid, that makes a mock of all that be good, if the Lord appeared in judgment and in wrath ? I tells ye all to repent of your unrighteousness, and I warns ye to flee from the wrath to come ; but ye stiffen your necks and harden your hearts, and give but a deaf ear to my exhortations."

"We don't make our necks stiff," was Berry's indignant



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protest ; “ you said you had a stiff neck yourself this morning, Thomas, so there now ! ”

Berry as usual had the last word, and Thomas turned away with a sniff and a grunt, knowing it was perfectly useless to pursue the subject further.

But the children’s words had the effect of making him dwell that afternoon for some considerable time on the Lord’s second coming, and his honest, earnest pleading reduced one poor fisherman’s wife to tears.

“ A’m not ready,” she sobbed when Dan Cobb, the blacksmith, went up to her afterward. “ A hath been hearin’ a voice sin the little master yon cometh up to me t’other week, and asketh a to be putted in his pictur’. ‘ Air ye ready?’ saith he to a, ‘ for the Lord be comin’ zurely,’ an’ a had to shake me head in sorrow, an’ a told un a were far from the kingdom. A hath heard a voice at nights latterly, ‘ Sal Blake, be ye ready?’ an’ a be clean demented, for ’tis a zign zurely.”

There was soon a little praying circle round her, and Guy and Berry looked on with great curiosity for some minutes, then Guy drew his sister gently away out of the kitchen.

“ It’s horrid to stare at her so, Berry ; I should hate it. I wonder she doesn’t run away, and tell God about it by herself. That’s what I did ; they would make me feel all in a muddle crowding round me so.”

“ Did you sob and cry when you were alone?” asked Berry, with round eyes.

“ No ; but it’s all right, Mr. Curate said I needn’t wait till I could cry.”

“ I think,” said Berry, thoughtfully, “ that when I get ready for Jesus’ coming, I should like to be crying in the middle of a lot of people. It’s much grander than doing it alone, when no one can’t see you, and make a fuss over you. I like to be made a fuss over ; and p’raps Thomas would get out his handkerchief, and jump round me, wiping his eyes, like he’s doing to Mrs. Blake.”

The Curate's Illness

Guy looked at his sister in wonder ; the feminine weakness of loving to make a sensation was incomprehensible to him. And then he said pityingly, " You don't understand a bit ; why you forget every one else but God when you feel so—so bad ; I did. Here comes the people ; let's get out of the way."

But Berry would not. Mrs. Blake was hurrying out, her handkerchief up to her eyes, when she felt a small hand take hold of her shawl.

" Do you feel better, Mrs. Blake ? "

" Bless the little maid, a'm a shoken up to pieces, but a'm trustin'."

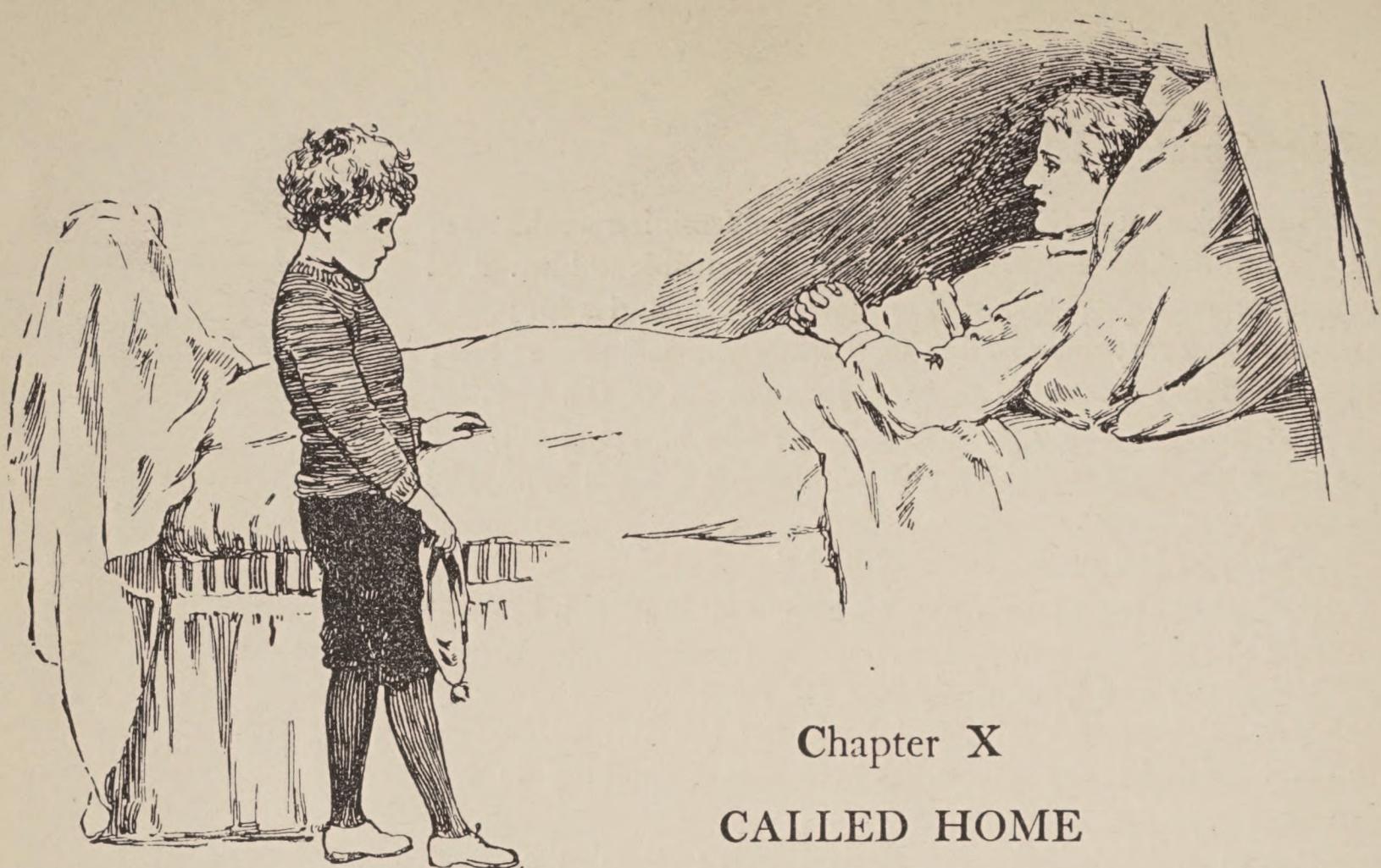
" And are you quite ready now for Jesus to come again ? "

Mrs. Blake stood still, and lifted her tear-stained face up to the twilight sky above. There was something in her shining eyes that awed Berry.

" A'm trustin'," she repeated, quietly ; " an' the good Lord have promised, an' He won't deceive a."

Berry slipped away without a word, and was wonderfully silent for some time afterward.





Chapter X

CALLED HOME

MR. GRANT made little real progress, but some days he seemed to rally wonderfully, and it was on such occasions that Guy would be allowed to go and see him. Very serious talks were held by the sick bed, and Guy's quick apprehension of all that he was told, and earnest determination to carry it out in his daily life, cheered and comforted the young curate. There was no talk of death between them; the second coming was the subject that engrossed their minds and thoughts.

"Jesus keeps us waiting a long time, doesn't He?" Guy said one afternoon.

"The great thing is to work for Him; there's so much to do yet before He comes. Of course, one never knows when it will be finished. You have your work to do, my boy; see that you do it. Don't let Him come and find you idle."

"I hardly know what my work is."

"To be a faithful little servant, to be found doing your work when He comes."

"I wish"—Guy hesitated, then went on with a blush of shame mounting in his cheeks—"I used to say I would never

Called Home

be a servant. Berry and me like to be master and mistress best; but I oughtn't to mind being God's servant, ought I? I suppose it's just doing what God tells me, like a servant. I'm trying hard; but do you think God would tell me I ought to preach like Thomas, because I never, *never* could do that if I was a hundred years old—I should be so frightened."

"I am quite sure God doesn't want you to preach now. I am writing out, in a big round hand, some things God tells His little servants to do. I am going to give you a slip of paper for every day in the year, which I want you to keep in a box, and take out every morning when you get up. Ask God to help you to do it in the daytime."

Guy looked keenly interested in this.

"And when are you going to preach again?" he asked.

"God knows; I don't. Perhaps my preaching is done;" and a wistful look came into the young man's eyes as he spoke.

A week later, and Guy was in the sick room again. Mr. Grant seemed very weak now, and could not talk much, so he asked Guy to read him a chapter.

"Our chapter—may I?" said Guy, eagerly. "I can read it quite nicely now. Motherkin says Berry and I are getting on fast with our lessons."

The twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew was read through, and then Mr. Grant asked for the last chapter of Revelation.

"I think," he said, feebly, "that perhaps the Master is going to call me home before He comes again to this earth."

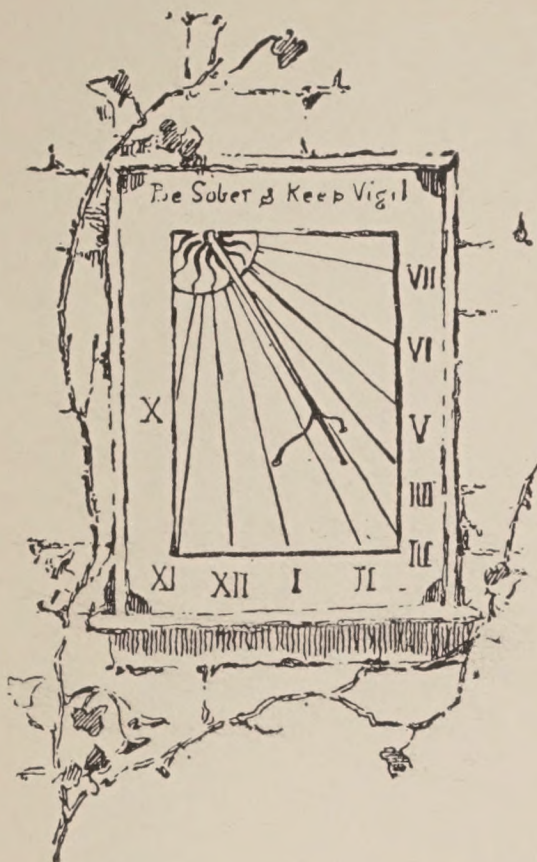
As the boy ceased reading, he leaned forward eagerly, a strange, bright light in his eyes, and a radiant smile upon his lips. With uplifted hand he gasped,—

"He is coming! I see Him! Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

With a crash the Bible slipped from Guy's hand upon the floor, and Guy himself, starting to his feet, trembled with excitement, as his gaze followed the curate's. He was perfectly convinced that the supreme moment had come, and that now both he and Mr. Grant would be caught up to meet



A Puzzling Pair



the Lord. The last gleam of the setting sun stole in at the casement window, and lighted upon the dying man's face. For a moment there was breathless silence, and then with a slight gasping sigh the curate sank back on his pillow. Good old Mrs. Gates coming in at that instant, was puzzled at the child's rapt attitude, as he stood with upward, wondering glance, but her attention was claimed at once by the still face on the pillow.

"Master Guy, go out of the room. I saw the doctor riding by. Call him in, though 'tis too late, I know."

Guy came back to earth with a quick revulsion of feeling, and there was bitter disappointment in his tone as he said,—

"It isn't Him, after all! Is Mr. Grant worse? He sat up in bed and said he saw Jesus coming. I'm afraid he's dreadfully disappointed at making such a mistake."

Then Mrs. Gates put her apron to her eyes.

"Not he, little master. Of course he saw the Lord, for He came to fetch him home."

Awed, bewildered, and a little frightened, after one look at that white, still face, Guy fled from the room, and half an hour after surprised his stepmother by rushing in upon her, as she sat knitting some stockings for Berry by the fire in the morning room. Flinging himself upon her lap, he burst into tears; and this was such an unusual occurrence that Mrs. Forrester, putting her knitting down, gathered the little figure in her arms and tried to soothe him with gentle words and caresses.

"I did think Jesus was really coming, motherkin. Mr. Curate said he saw Him, and He did come, Mrs. Gates said, only I didn't see Him. He came for Mr. Curate. How I wish He had let me see Him! Oh, I wish He would come for me!" This was sobbed out presently, and Mrs. Forrester asked at once,—

"Is Mr. Grant worse, Guy? What has happened?"

"I don't quite know, but I think he is dead. He fell back in bed after he saw Jesus, and he didn't move or speak."

Called Home

"You poor little creature, who was there with you?"

"Mrs. Gates came in."

Guy sobbed on; his little frame was quite overwrought, and Mrs. Forrester kept him in her arms till he was quieter.

An hour later, quite exhausted, he lay in a heavy slumber on the couch, when his father entered the room. Mrs. Forrester explained what had happened, adding,—

"I have been out into the kitchen, and Matty has already heard that Mr. Grant is dead. It must have been a terrible experience to poor little Guy. He was quite alone with him when it took place. I had no idea the end was so near, or I would not have allowed him to visit him."

"He will have to meet death sooner or later," said Mr. Forrester, thoughtfully, as he looked down upon his sleeping boy. "I never could understand the infatuation the children had for that poor young fellow. He was quite an enthusiast."

Mrs. Forrester did not answer her husband for a moment. She, besides Guy, had been learning lessons at that sick bed.

"I think, dear, he knew he had not long to live, and that made him more in earnest. He felt the reality of what he preached, I know. And I think Guy will be the better for having been so much with him."

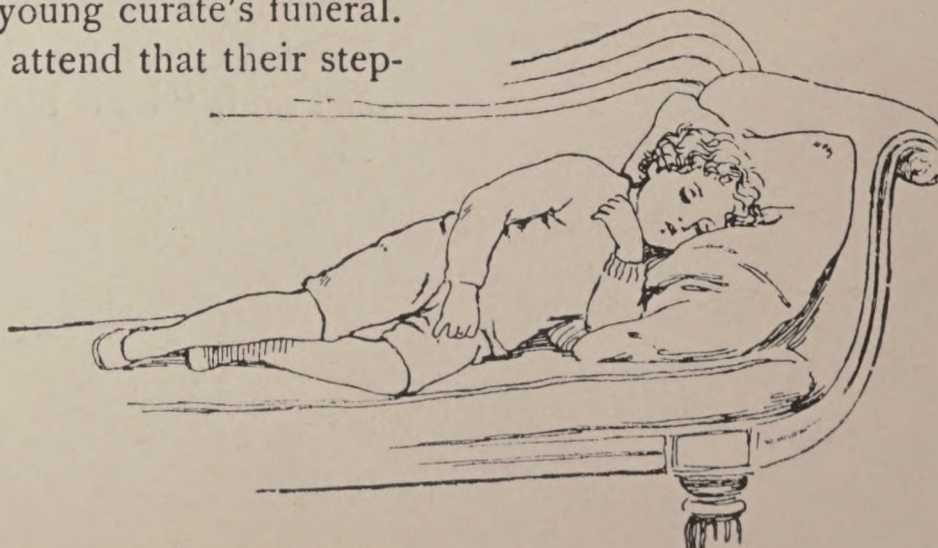
Guy stirred and woke, and for a moment seemed quite confused.

"Well, my boy," said his father, sitting down and taking him on his knee, "you've been through rather a trying time to-day. Now you must forget all about it. And don't fret about your friend. If he could speak, he would tell you he is better off."

Guy looked up at his father with grave, sorrowful eyes.

"I'm not sorry about Mr. Curate," he said, with a little shake of his head; "I'm only so fearfully sorry that Jesus was actually in the room, and I—I never saw Him."

There was a large gathering at the young curate's funeral. Guy and Berry had begged so hard to attend that their step-mother had taken them.



A Puzzling Pair

"We always go to all the funerals with Matty," said Berry, "and hold handkerchiefs over our eyes, and I'll promise to be very good, and not look out at the corners of mine at all."

Coming home from it, Guy said, reflectively,—

"If Jesus doesn't come down in the sky very soon, do you think I might ask Him to come and fetch me quietly, like He did Mr. Curate?"

"That would be dying," said Berry, looking at her brother with big eyes. "I don't like too many funerals, so don't die yet, Guy. Besides, who would paint all the pictures you are going to when you grow up? I couldn't!"

"No," said Mrs. Forrester, smiling; "we want you here, Guy. I want you to take care of your father and me when we are old, and work for us. You must try to live to be of some use in the world."

Guy straightened himself, and held his head erect.

"I will, motherkin. I will be a great man when I grow up, and I'll be a 'faithful and wise' servant."

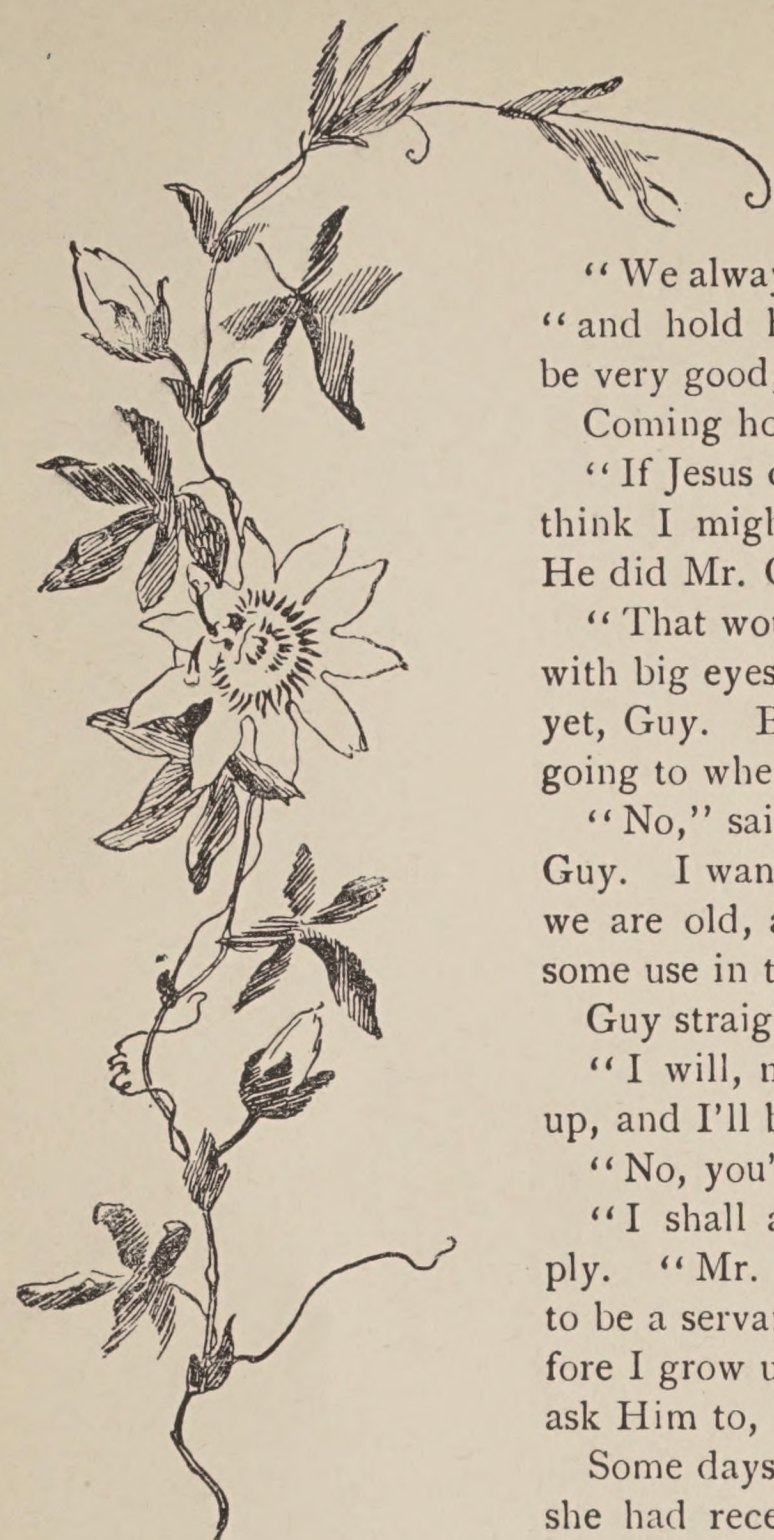
"No, you'll be the master then," corrected Berry.

"I shall always be God's servant," was Guy's earnest reply. "Mr. Curate told me the greatest king on earth ought to be a servant of God; but p'raps Jesus will come down before I grow up—I hope He will, and I think Mr. Curate will ask Him to, because he knows how we're looking out for it."

Some days after this, Mrs. Forrester told the children that she had received a letter from Miss Marchmount asking her to allow them to pay her a little visit. "Your father and I have been talking over it, and we think we will let you go, for we hope to have workmen in the house soon, and the fewer there are here the better."

Mrs. Forrester did not add that her husband thought the change of scene would be beneficial to Guy, who had been unusually quiet since Mr. Grant's death.

"I do not want him to grow up a visionary enthusiast," he had said, "he is too religious for a child, his thoughts always



Called Home

seem occupied with heaven. Thomas informed me yesterday that he had not been in any scrape for a week ! ”

Of course the twins were wild with delight at the prospect ahead of them. They could talk of nothing else, and as they had never been beyond the town six miles off, or in a train at all, it was indeed an event to them. Mrs. Forrester busied herself in getting their clothes tidy, and Berry was delighted at seeing a pretty pale blue evening dress being made for her by her stepmother's skillful fingers.

There was much talk and advice in the kitchen, and the evening before their departure Berry and Guy had a parting meal with Thomas and Matty.

“ ’Tis going out into the wicked world for ye,” said Matty, shaking her head, “ and ye’re too small to be sent visitin’ ; ’tis a pity. Who there be to look after ye I dunna know ! ”

“ Father is going to take us there, and we don’t want any one to look after us,” said Guy, sturdily.

“ An’ to such a poor misguided leddy as Miss Marchmount ! ” groaned Thomas. “ Why, ’twas she that telled her maid to coom down and stop the ‘ screechin’ and hollerin’ ’ in the kitchen, and that our Sabbath singin’ ! Ye’ll be led astray like foolish sheep, an’ our trainin’ will be destroyed forevermore ! ”

“ Yes,” said Berry, her eyes dancing with mischief, “ we’re going to be in the middle of the wicked world at last, and Guy and I will eat jam tarts and plum cake all day, and drive in a gold coach, and go to parties every night, and I’m going to shops all day long. P’raps we sha’n’t never come home again. I will marry a fairy prince who will take me to his castle, and Guy will paint pictures for the Queen, and will always go about with a bag of money and a blue velvet cloak and golden shoes.”

“ We’re going to stay in the cloisters close to the Queen’s castle,” put in Guy, breathlessly, “ and we shall see her in her carriage. Miss Marchmount told me all about her.”

“ ’Tis a popish house ye be a-goin’ to, an’ I’ve me very



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grave doots as to what ye'll be wanted there for. 'Tis cloisters, an' monks, an' convents for nuns that burned our fathers at the stake, an' maybe 'tis for makin' ye into Jesuits that Miss Marchmount be a-tryin' after."

But none of Thomas' and Matty's doubts and fears could damp the children's spirits. Now and then slight qualms of shyness would come over Guy.

"I hope there won't be crowds of strange people at Miss Marchmount's," he confided to his sister on their way upstairs to bed that night; "it makes me feel so uncomfortable."

"You can always hide behind me," replied Berry, as unconcernedly as possible.

They were at the top of the stairs as they spoke, and Guy suddenly turned to his sister with sparkling eyes,—

"Berry, we've forgotten to wish Taffyraggy good-bye!"

"We shall have to go now," whispered Berry, excitedly; "he will pine away and die if he thinks we've left off visiting him. And we sha'n't have no time in the morning."

"Come on, then, and we'll tell him we'll try and get his pardon from the Queen and bring it back with us. How pleased he will be!"

Together they stole along the dimly-lighted passage that led to the west wing of the house. The darkness and loneliness only made it the more exciting, and when they came to the door, and Guy in a muffled voice began carrying on a conversation through the keyhole with the imaginary tenant, Berry more than half believed their play was real.

"Ask him if he is hungry?" she whispered.

"He says we haven't been near him since last week, and he has had to eat the rats and mice."

Berry shivered. "How very nasty of him, and very cruel! How did he catch them?"

"He says he hooked them out of their holes with his walking stick."

Berry was about to make a suggestion, when a slight scream



Called Home

made them start, and turning hastily round they saw their stepmother peering down the passage, candle in hand.

"Oh, children, how you frightened me!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing here? I thought you were on your way to bed."

"Yes, so we are," said Guy, slowly; "we were just wishing a friend of ours good-bye, that's all."

"A friend! What do you mean? I thought your father did not like you to go near the west wing."

"He doesn't mind us being in the passage—it's only a make-belief, motherkin," and making a little spring up to her, Berry added, coaxingly, "Just carry me to bed, do; you have such strong arms."

Mrs. Forrester took her up at once. The twins occupied a large place in her heart, though she was continually finding out how little she knew or understood them.

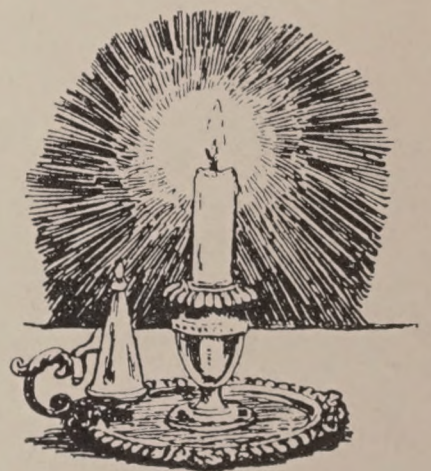
"I don't know what I shall do without you both," she said a little time later as she sat by their bedsides; "but I hope you will both try to be very good while you are away. I don't like giving you a lot of advice, but you know when you ought to say 'please' and 'thank you'; and be always ready to open the door and shut it for grown-up people, wait on them, and offer to run messages."

"That's like servants," put in Berry; "I shall let Guy do that, he's a kind of double servant now. Thomas found out a verse in the Bible about him that said he was just the same as a servant if he was a son and heir; and now he says he is one of God's servants, so he must do all the messages for everybody. And when he has done all the grown-up peoples' messages he can do some for me!"

"I'll never do your messages," put in Guy, hotly.

"Hush, hush! don't begin to quarrel. You must get to sleep as fast as you can, for you will have a tiring journey to-morrow."

And giving them a kiss each, Mrs. Forrester left them to the sweet, unbroken slumbers of childhood.





Chapter XI

IN A STRANGE PLACE

SUCH an eventful day it was ! First the early breakfast in the dim daylight ; the impressive leave-takings of the old servants ; the long drive into the town with their father, and the arrival at the big railway station ! The journey was certainly the most exciting part of it all, and the twins' tongues never ceased talking—there were so many questions to be asked, so many exclamations of delight and bewilderment to be made. But as the day wore on, they grew quieter, and when they at last reached their destination, it was a very sleepy little couple that Mr. Forrester lifted out of the train and put into a cab with himself.

The children roused themselves during the short drive from the station, and admired the twinkling lights high up on the castle walls.

“ Is this where the Queen lives, in the street opposite the shops ? ” asked Berry, with disappointment in her face. “ I thought a castle was on the top of a mountain generally ; it is in our picture-books.”

“ How jolly the shops look ; it must be lovely to live right opposite them,” observed Guy, flattening his nose against the windows.

In a Strange Place

When the cab turned through a stone archway, guarded by soldiers, and finally came to a standstill before a dark entry in what the twins thought was a church, they took hold of each other's hands and stepped out in great awe and bewilderment, and followed their father along the old cloisters almost on tiptoe.

But when a few minutes after they were ushered in to all the light and warmth of Miss Marchmount's home; when they followed their father up a winding staircase into a softly-carpeted, luxuriously-furnished drawing-room, filled with hothouse plants, their spirits rose, and they greeted the old lady with effusive affection.

Their father did not stay very long; he was on his way to London, and the twins were so tired that in spite of the novelty and strangeness of their surroundings, they were quite willing to go to bed after their tea.

Guy was delighted at having a tiny room all to himself, and Berry, who slept with Miss Marchmount's maid, was in his room in her little dressing-gown at seven o'clock the next morning.

"Guy, are you awake?"

"Of course I am," said Guy, sitting up in bed; "I've been looking at my command for the day."

He alluded to his packet of slips of paper that Mr. Grant had given him just before he died. Each slip contained a short text, and Guy kept them in a little wooden box, taking one out each morning in the most methodical way.

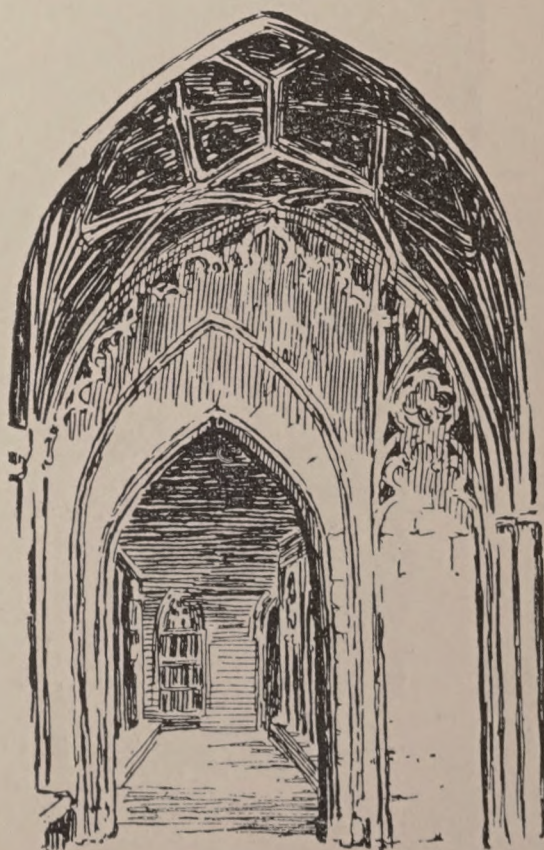
"What is it this morning?" asked Berry.

"'Praise Him, all ye servants of the Lord.'"

"That means sing and be happy, doesn't it?"

"Yes, I s'pose so. I've been singing already that hymn Thomas is so fond of having—'I love Jesus, Hallelujah!'"

"Oh, well—even if I'm not a servant I can sing and be happy. So I'll help you with that text to-day. Fancy that lazy old Beaton is fast asleep! I told her just now I was sure it was time to get up, and she said she had half an hour more,



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and rolled herself up in the clothes and is snoring as loud as Thomas. You make haste and dress, Guy, and we'll go and look into all the rooms. I didn't see half the house last night. Didn't you like the dining-room? It was like church with the painted windows, and the floor is so jolly and slippery. We can have some splendid slides before breakfast if you're quick!"

She left him, and astonished Beaton when that worthy roused herself, by the expedition with which she had made her toilet.

"Have I had my bath? O' course I have, I always have a cold bath, and no one never helps me. Why, before motherkin came, Guy and I always dressed ourselves. She sometimes calls me into her room and brushes my hair, but that's only because she likes doing it. Do you dress Miss Marchmount?"

"I always go to her at eight o'clock. Breakfast is not till half-past nine, so mind you and your brother don't get into mischief. We aren't accustomed to children here, and the master is very fidgety."

Very shortly after, the twins were creeping through the old-fashioned house, putting their little heads into every door and corner. They finally settled down in the dining-room and watched the preparations for breakfast with great interest. It was a beautiful old room, panelled in oak with a wonderful carved chimney-piece, and stained-glass windows which greatly took the children's fancy.

"I shall have pictures in all my windows when I grow up," said Berry, "and you will have to paint them, Guy."

"I'm going to draw a picture of the Queen in her castle," put in Guy, dreamily; "I shall do a lot of pictures while I am here, and I must get some more people to put in my big picture."

"Yes, everybody here must be quite ready for Jesus to come again; Beaton told me people always went to church twice a day here, and this house is all a part of the church," she said.

"I feel very good; don't you, Berry?"



In a Strange Place

Berry drew her small foot across the beeswaxed floor.

"No," she said; "I'm going to have a good slide. Come on, Guy!"

For a moment or two Guy resisted the temptation; but when he saw his sister deliberately roll back the rug and spin along the boards with delightful rapidity, he joined her, and the sliding proved so exciting, that when the door quietly opened, the sedate old butler carrying a tray of cups and saucers was unnoticed, and Berry shot into his arms, causing the downfall of herself and the tray, and a general destruction of all the china.

The butler, Graves by name, muttered an imprecation, and the twins came to a standstill, aghast at the accident.

"This all comes of the mistress bringing children here: she must be in her dotage," grumbled the old servant, as down on his knees he went to collect the fragments.

Berry was rubbing her elbows and knees dolefully, and Guy eagerly picking up the broken china, when Canon Marchmount entered the room. He was a small, grey-haired man with very shaggy eyebrows and piercing dark eyes. The twins had not seen him before, as he was dining out when they arrived. Naturally he was very vexed; but Graves received the scolding, and this Berry could not stand.

"It's my fault," she said, looking up frankly into the Canon's face; "I was sliding and I tumbled against the tray and knocked it down. Guy and me are very sorry; if the cups don't cost a lot of money we will buy you some others instead. If we break anything at home, Matty always takes the first pennies we get to pay for it!"

Canon Marchmount looked at the children rather grimly.

"If my sister asks you here, she ought to provide you a nursery; take a seat against the wall there until she comes down, and she will know how to manage you. Graves, where is *The Times*?"

Berry and Guy clambered upon two very stately oak chairs



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against the wall and regarded the Canon with perplexed and curious eyes. He was soon engrossed with the paper, and it was not till Miss Marchmount entered the room that the twins found their voices again.

The Canon's tone was somewhat querulous as he informed his sister of what had happened, but she did not seem at all disturbed about it.

"Never mind, Charles, we are getting into such a groove here that they will wake us up. Come along to breakfast, chicks, and keep your sliding for out of doors."

Guy and Berry gladly obeyed ; and being somewhat awed by their new surroundings, were unusually silent during the meal.

After breakfast came prayers, and then Miss Marchmount took the children off to her room. They were charmed with everything they saw.

"You've got your rooms so full of things," said Guy ; "it looks like a shop."

"But it's very comfable," put in Berry.

"I am wondering now I have got you here how I can employ you," said Miss Marchmount, a little frown between her eyes. "You see, I am a very busy person and have a large correspondence. I am generally writing letters all the morning, and I don't think I could stand you fidgeting round here. In the afternoon I take a short walk and you shall come with me, and then while I rest afterward you shall amuse me by your talk, but for the rest of the day you must amuse yourselves. Only I do implore you to keep out of mischief, and don't annoy my brother. He doesn't understand children."

"We know how to amuse ourselves," Guy broke in eagerly ; "we always do at home, and I want to draw a lot of pictures."

"Yes, and we'll go out for a walk now," asserted Berry, "there's lots to be seen, and I'm going to look into every shop window in the town."

"I'm going to look into every castle window till I see the Queen," Guy said, "and when I see her I'll draw her picture."



In a Strange Place

"Well, go along, and don't be late for lunch. Half-past one, sharp!"

Miss Marchmount turned to her writing-desk, and the twins made themselves scarce till luncheon. A few misgivings crossed her mind as to the prudence of sending two such small children out in a strange town alone, but she knew something of their independent life at home, and was too easy-going to put herself out on their account. She was pleased to see them come to the table with well-brushed heads and clean hands and faces, but they were brimful of eager interest and curiosity as to all they had seen, and could not long be silent.

"Please may we talk, Mr. Canon?" asked Berry, breathlessly, between mouthfuls of hot mutton.

"My name is Marchmount," said that gentleman, austere; "if you have any sensible remark to make I shall be pleased to hear it."

"We're so sorry for the poor Queen," continued Berry, perfectly unabashed. "Are the soldiers afraid she'll run away? They keep all the gates and wouldn't let us in at one of them. I asked one soldier who put him there, and he said he didn't know unless it was his sergeant. The Queen is quite shut in, and they wouldn't let us go near her. But I shall get in somehow, I will run in very quick when they aren't looking, and I know they won't be able to catch me!"

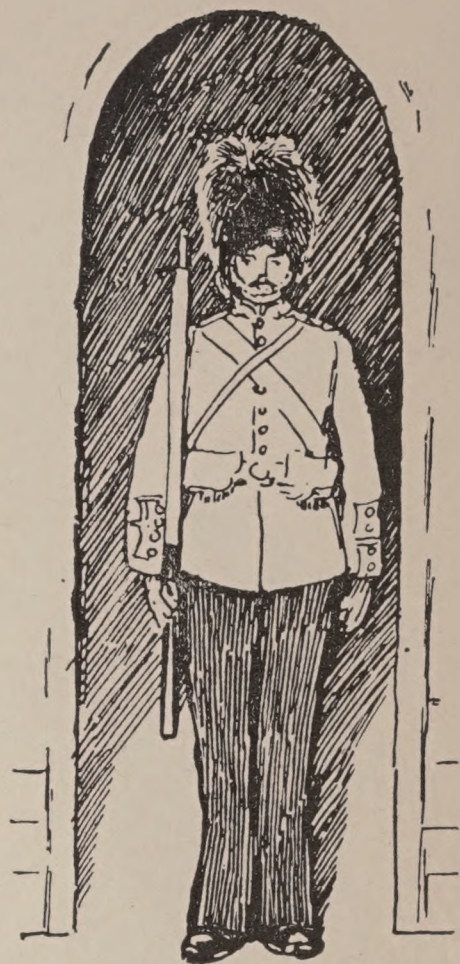
"You will be shot dead if you do that," Canon Marchmount said, solemnly, though with a twinkle in his eye. "The sentries are placed there to keep off all boys and girls from the Queen: it is her command."

Berry's eyes were round with wonder.

"Doesn't she like boys and girls? We wouldn't hurt her or make a noise."

"Where else did you go this morning?" asked Miss Marchmount.

"We went to see the shops, and we got into a big park



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with trees each side, and then we came back and tried to get into the church next door, but a policeman told us service was going on. Do you go to church every day, Miss Marchmount?"

"When I'm well enough I do. My brother always does."

"I should like to go to church to-day," Guy observed, meditatively, "because I'll be able to do what my text tells me. It's rather difficult to do it all day long."

"What is difficult?" asked Miss Marchmount, who was bent upon drawing the children out for her brother's benefit.

"It's 'Praise Him, O ye servants of the Lord,' and as I'm one of His servants I've got to do it."

"You shall go to the five o'clock service this afternoon. Charles, they can go with you if I feel unable for it."

The Canon did not look greatly pleased at this prospect, but he said nothing.

"Guy says he will have to draw the Queen without seeing her," Berry went on. "But I tell him he can put her in his picture, for she's sure to be ready for Jesus when He comes."

"What picture are you talking about?" asked Canon Marchmount, a gleam of interest in his eyes.

"It's Guy's picture of Jesus coming down from the sky, and all the people who are ready going up in the air to meet Him. It's a beautiful picture, such a big one. If you ask Guy, he'll show it to you."

"A wonderful production," murmured Miss Marchmount.

"You can bring it to my study and show it to me after luncheon," said the Canon.

Berry looked delighted but Guy slightly embarrassed. And shortly after they were both unrolling a great piece of cartridge paper with much pride and solemnity before the good Canon's puzzled eyes. It was some minutes before he could make anything of it.

"It's terribly confused," he said. "Are those bodies or flowers or plants?"



In a Strange Place

"They're people, of course," said Berry, indignantly, "and they're all true people—not one make-believe! The ones coming down are the dead ones, and the Bible ones, and the ones going up are people still alive and people we know. I expect your eyes are wrong like Thomas's, and you want bigger specs."

"I should like to draw you going up," said Guy, modestly, "if you would let me. I want some more people at the bottom; there aren't many at home who will let me put them in. They aren't ready enough, they say, and Berry isn't ready yet—I've left a place for her, but if she doesn't make haste I shall have to fill it up, and then she'll be too late."

Berry shook her head dolefully.

"I do forget it so," she said, "but I mean to be ready soon. Do you think that Jesus will come while we're staying with you, Mr.—Mr. Marchmount? I s'pose you know it may be very soon?"

Canon Marchmount looked at the eager-faced children with real interest now.

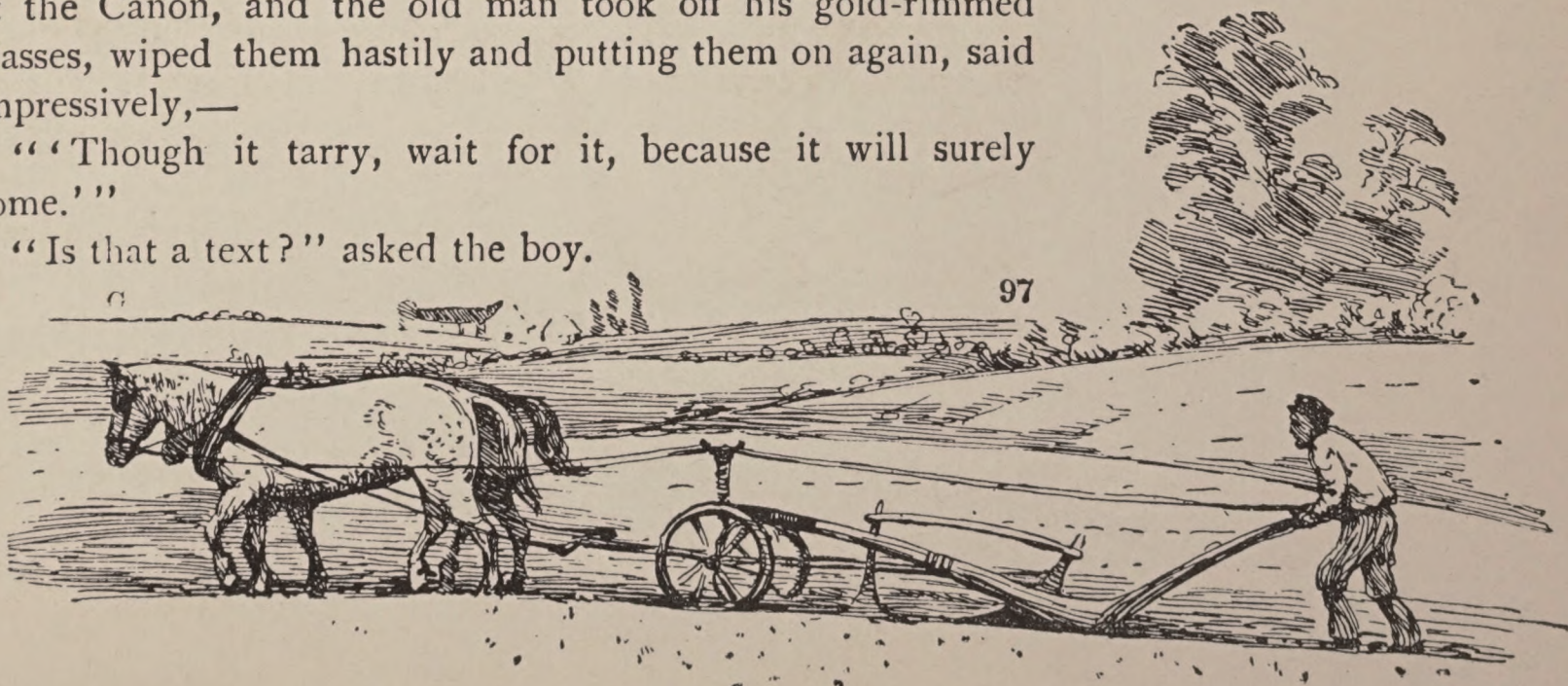
"Who has told you about these things?" he asked.

"Mr. Curate did," Guy replied, gravely, "he used to preach sermons about it, and he expected Jesus to come every day. He did come at last, but He came very quietly and only Mr. Curate saw Him. I was in the room myself and I never saw Him! He just came for Mr. Curate and He took him up to heaven: I s'pose Jesus didn't want him to get tired of waiting. I'm dreffully afraid sometimes I shall get tired. I did expect He would have come by this time."

Guy's soft brown eyes were almost tearful as he looked up at the Canon, and the old man took off his gold-rimmed glasses, wiped them hastily and putting them on again, said impressively,—

"'Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come.'"

"Is that a text?" asked the boy.



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"Yes, and I will give you another, 'Blessed is he that waiteth.'"

Guy smiled contentedly. "Mr. Curate told me the servants mustn't only watch but wait, but I think waiting is the hardest."

"Do you really think Jesus might be here to-morrow?" Berry asked, with a little anxiety in her voice.

"I dare not say He will not be," was the Canon's grave reply. A silence fell on the little party, which Guy presently broke.

"And may I put you in my picture, please?"

"Yes, if you like, though I think your talent is scarcely sufficiently developed to attempt such elaborate subjects. Learn to draw a cottage, a fence, an orange, and such-like objects correctly, and then you may attempt greater things later."

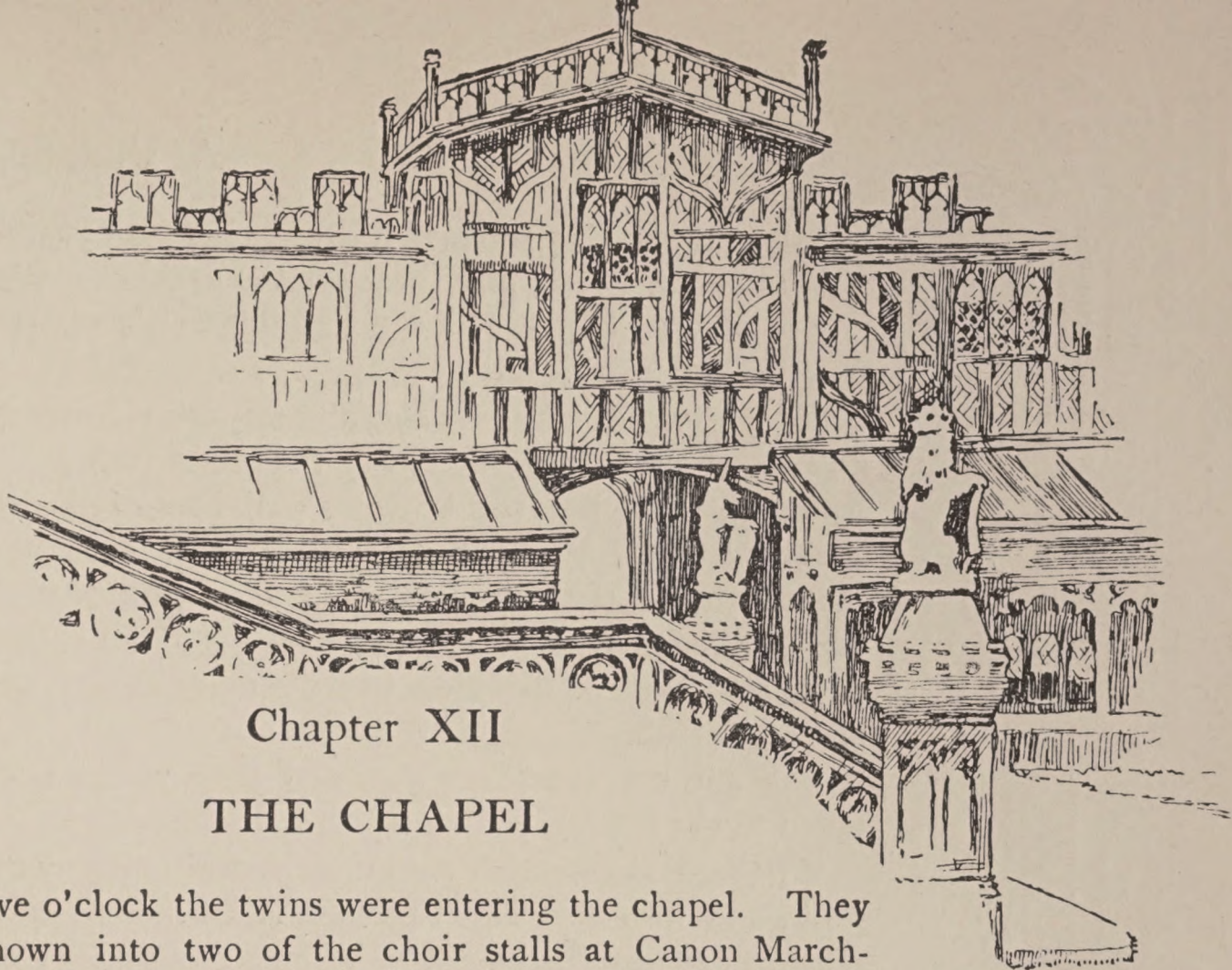
"But there's nothing Guy can't draw!" remonstrated Berry; "he can draw everything in the world, can't you, Guy?"

Guy blushed. "I s'pose I only draw them in a sort of way," he said, apologetically.

"Now I must request you to leave me," said Canon Marchmount, and the twins went off to his sister's room, where lying flat on the floor, Guy spent the next two hours in trying to depict both the Queen in her royal robes, and Canon Marchmount in his surplice in his wonderful picture.

Berry gave him her advice, looked at picture-books and chatted to Miss Marchmount, and so the time passed.





Chapter XII

THE CHAPEL

AT five o'clock the twins were entering the chapel. They were shown into two of the choir stalls at Canon Marchmount's request, and once in the big-cushioned seats, they were lost in admiration and awe at their surroundings. It was nearly dark, and the wax candles were all lighted, throwing weird shadows on the beautiful old carving, and illumining the richly colored banners overhead. The twins had never been inside any church but their own little country one with plain whitewashed walls and roof. The hush and solemnity that came over them as they followed the verger into the choir on tiptoe, only deepened, as they gazed up into the dim lofty roof, and from thence to the stained windows and wonderful carving around them. Guy's eyes shone with admiring delight at the grace and beauty of it all. He had been born and bred amidst the beauties of nature, but the beauties of art were still unknown to him, and it came upon him with an almost startling revelation.

"It's like a fairy palace underground," whispered Berry to him; but when the first notes of the grand old organ pealed out, and a white-robed procession of choristers and clergy

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quietly entered, Guy whispered back to her with beating heart, "It's heaven, Berry, and these are the angels coming in!"

The service began, but the familiar words did not bring Guy back to earth.

Many gazed at his sweet face and earnest, shining eyes, and asked each other in whispers who the pretty little curly-haired strangers were, but the boy was oblivious of them all; he seemed as if he were in a dream. The clear, sweet tones of the choristers, the alternations of light and shade on the organ, filled his little heart with ecstasy; and eyes and ears were absorbed in drinking in the strange sweetness of such an atmosphere.

The anthem was given out, and then with a start he listened to the solemn yet triumphant words,—

"Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen."

Berry turned to him with a beaming face.

"Don't they sing it nicely, Guy?"

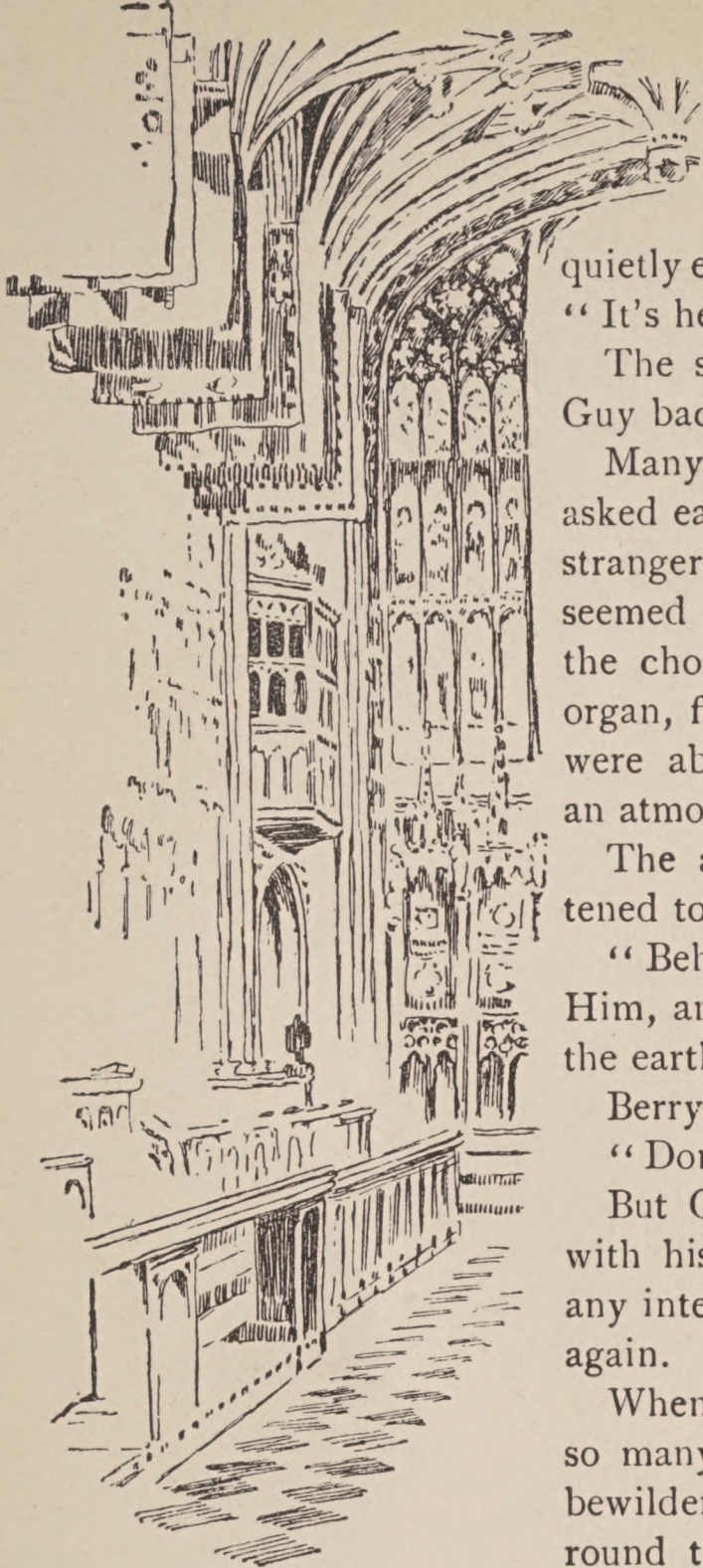
But Guy frowned at her, and turned his back upon her, with his face toward the singers. He felt he did not want any interruption to his thoughts, and Berry did not speak again.

When the service was over, the twins lingered, and asked so many questions of one of the vergers that he grew quite bewildered, and at length promised he would show them round the chapel the next day if they would leave him now in peace to lock up.

When they returned to Miss Marchmount's room they found the Canon there, standing on the hearthrug, his back to the fire.

"Well, how did you enjoy the service?" asked Miss Marchmount.

"It was a very grand place," said Berry, looking up at her with large eyes; "and such a lot of clergymen, and some of



The Chapel

them little boy clergymen. We never have more than one clergyman at our church—sometimes two, but never more.”

“Bless the child! Do you take the choristers for clergymen?” And Miss Marchmount gave her dry chuckle.

“What’s a chorister?” asked Berry.

“A singer.”

“Well, they *did* sing! In your church its only the clergymen who sing and the boys. You have such differcult singing, and they sing up and down all the time; all the prayers were sung, and one poor clergyman was nearly crying when it came to his turn to sing; he did sound so sad. Guy and I always sing in our church at home, but we couldn’t sing to-night, I was too frightened.”

“The choir leads both in prayer and praise, and you should follow the words in your prayer-book in a reverent manner,” said Canon Marchmount, gravely.

“Then we don’t have to do nothing,” exclaimed Berry, “except see they sing right, like motherkin does in the lesson books when we say our lessons?”

Miss Marchmount looked amused. Berry added with a sudden inspiration: “Do you know what I’ve just made up my mind to do? When I grow up into a rich lady, I shall keep a boy in my house in a clergyman’s gown to say my prayers for me when I’m tired, or don’t want to say them myself.”

Miss Marchmount gave a little laugh, then turning to Guy, said, “Come, young man, you are very silent; out with your thoughts! What is troubling you?”

Guy colored up, but made no reply.

“What did you think of our service, my boy?” asked the Canon; “did you like it?”

“I can’t talk about it,” said Guy, with a shake of his head, his eyes shining with a glad light as he looked up at the Canon; “I didn’t think there was anything in the world so beautiful.”



A Puzzling Pair

"The service or the chapel?"

"Oh, both! It was so strange, and dark, and high, and I almost thought it would do for heaven, and then I thought"—

He stopped, and would say no more; but Berry finished his sentence for him.

"I know. He told me as we were coming out. He thought that if Jesus had come just when they were singing about Him, that very likely He would have come right in and sat in one of the thrones by the door, because He would have liked to listen to it. Guy said Jesus perhaps might have thought it was almost as good as heaven!"

Guy had slipped out of the room before Berry had finished speaking. He was very quiet all that evening, and more than once Miss Marchmont asked him if he were well.

Later on as the twins were in their bedrooms retiring for the night, Berry slipped into her brother's little room to wish him "good-night," and resisting all Beaton's persuasions to come back with her at once, she curled herself up in her dressing-gown at the bottom of the bed, prepared for a good talk.

Guy was lying down, his face hidden in his pillow.

"Go away, Berry; I don't want you!"

"I sha'n't go away. Why are you so cross? Have you got a pain?"

"I don't want to talk to you."

Berry looked puzzled, but she knew Guy's moods better than any one else, and presently crept along to his side, and lay down beside him, then putting her curly head on the pillow close to his, she patted his cheek coaxingly with her soft little hand.

"There poor boy!" she said with a grandmotherly air, "I know you're crying about somefin, and you don't like me to see you. And I spects I know what it is. You couldn't sing and praise God as you wanted to in the church to-night. Never mind, you just tell God it was too grand and differcult for you, it wasn't your fault. I'm sure God will understand."



The Chapel

A great sob came from under the bedclothes as Guy wriggled away from his sister's touch, and she caught the muffled words, "It isn't that at all."

"Then what is it?" demanded Berry.

Guy raised his head with an effort.

"It has made me feel so dreadfully disappointed and sad; I liked seeing it all, but Berry, I shall never, never draw a picture again! I don't know how to. When I was in the church I felt, as I looked up, that my pictures were all rubbish, only fit to be burned. I knew then I could never draw the church, nor even a little bit of it. I feel like old Mary Potts at home, when her husband and two boys were drowned. Don't you remember she said, 'I am without hope, no one can comfort me'? That's what I am to-night!"

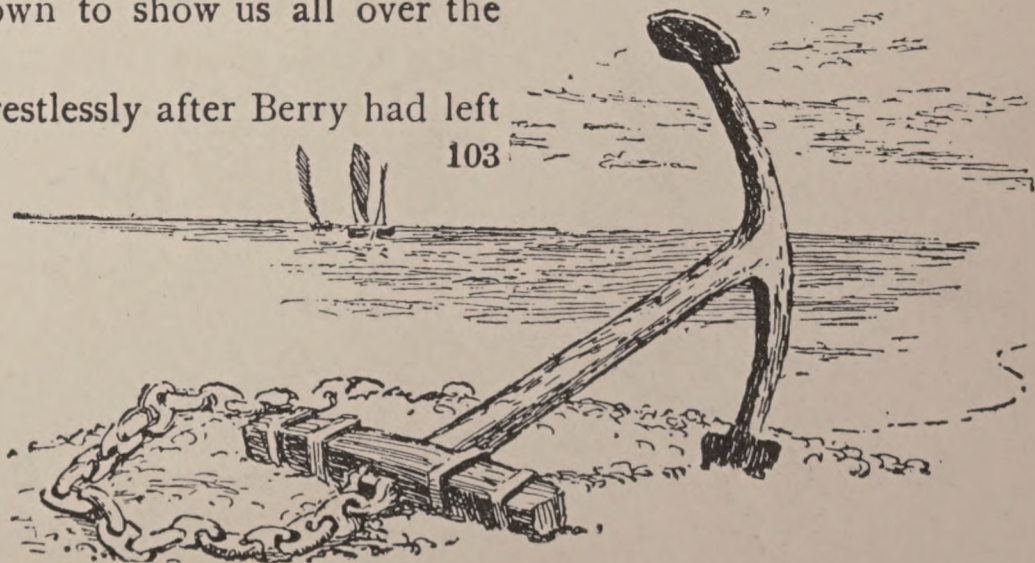
Berry looked quite puzzled. "But why, Guy? I liked seeing the church, it didn't make me unhappy. It's the Queen's church, Beaton says, though she hardly ever comes to it, so that's why it is so grand. When I'm grown up, I shall buy a church of my own, and use it every day. And I shall have red velvet cushions to sit on, I shall have it quite as comfable as this one is."

"I shall burn all my pictures," Guy repeated, mournfully; "I can't draw one little bit, and I shall never be an artist, and I shall be no good to nobody."

"You sha'n't burn the picture of Jesus coming again," said Berry, eagerly, "and I think you're a silly boy to talk of being no good. You're one of God's servants, and He will give you lots to do, and when you are not being His servant, you can be mine, and I'll tell you how you can be some good to me."

Then feeling that Guy was not in an interesting mood Berry slipped off the bed, after giving him another caressing pat on the cheek. "Go to sleep like a good boy, and we'll get that man in the woman's gown to show us all over the church to-morrow!"

Poor little Guy tossed about restlessly after Berry had left



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him, he was touched and stirred to the bottom of his heart by the wonderful weirdness and beauty of the dimly-lighted chapel. He was conscious now of what true art could represent, and though he could not express it in words, the realization of this crushed his tiny efforts in that direction.

"I thought I was an artist," he kept murmuring to himself, "and I'm nobody, and I can't do nothing."

It was a bitter lesson to the boy, and yet later on he found, as all others do, that this experience was the first step toward real progress.

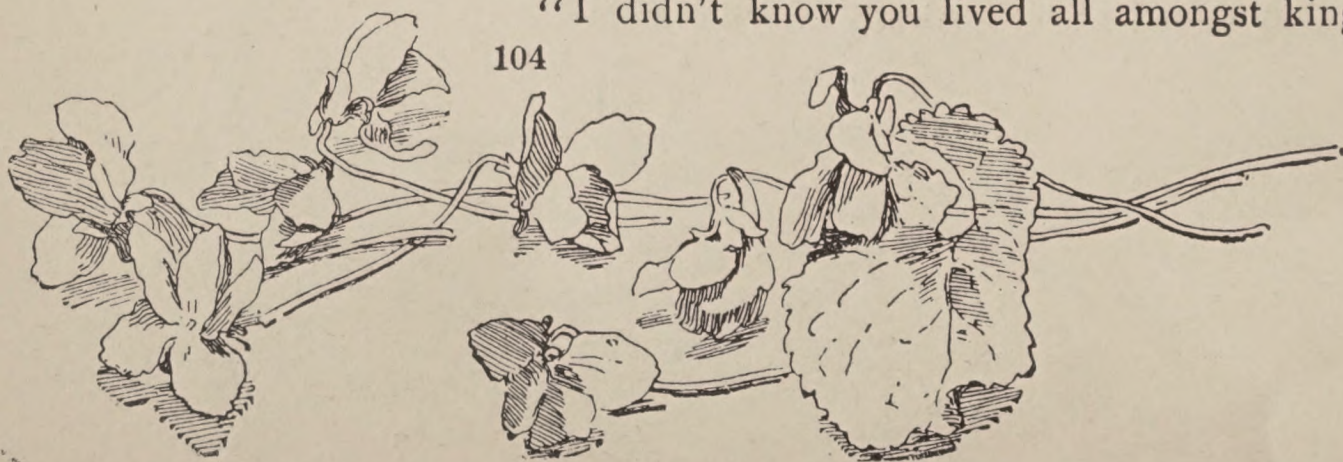
The next morning, the twins had the unusual privilege of being taken through the chapel and the adjoining precincts by Canon Marchmount himself. He told them of all the kings and queens who had lived at the Castle in years gone by, and had been buried in the royal vaults. He explained to them the order of the Knights of the Garter, and showed them the various arms and banners above the stalls in the choir. He took them to see the different tombs, and they gazed in solemn awe upon the recumbent figures, but the one that really interested them most was Princess Charlotte's monument at the end of the nave. The sun was streaming in through the yellow glass, and Berry could not tear herself away from it. "That's how I shall go up in the air when Jesus comes, all in a golden glory," she said with upturned face and shining eyes, "and all the wicked people will be hiding their faces and crying like those people are. You must draw me going up just like that, Guy."

"You're not ready," remonstrated her brother; "besides, I don't mean to finish that picture."

He looked longingly at the beautiful forms before him as he spoke, and heaved a great sigh.

A little later they were pouring out all their experiences to Miss Marchmount, who laid aside her writing, and listened with a keen sense of humor to their quaint remarks.

"I didn't know you lived all amongst kings and queens



The Chapel

here," said Berry. "We've heard about such a lot of people that we never knew before, crowds and crowds of them; and they're all underneath the church floor. Why does every one say 'the chapel'? It isn't like the chapels near us. Thomas says the chapels won't have painted windows or grand cushions, and this one has got them, so it must be a church. Do you think that perhaps in the middle of the night the kings and queens may get out of their graves, and come up and walk about the church like the fairies do when no one sees them?"

Guy's eyes kindled a little. "Perhaps they go softly into their seats, and one of them plays the organ by moonlight."

"And the knights take their flags down, and march round the big church outside, blowing trumpets," pursued Berry. "Oh, I do wish we could see them one night!"

"Just as we were coming in we saw a very old soldier," said Guy, turning to Miss Marchmount with puzzled eyes; "he spoke to Mr. Marchmount. Berry asked him if he was one of the soldiers who took care of the Queen, and he said he had fought for the Queen many years ago, so she was taking care of him now; and he asked Berry and me to go to tea with him to-morrow afternoon. May we?"

"That is Major Thomas, I should think," said Miss Marchmount. "Yes, go by all means. He lives quite alone with an old soldier servant, and he is as great a chatterbox as you two children are."





Chapter XIII

TEA WITH THE MAJOR

HAND in hand, dressed in their best clothes, the twins entered Major Thomas' little house at four o'clock the next afternoon. The door was opened by an old grey-haired man, who held himself so erect and still that the children looked up at him with awe. He showed them into a cozy little room, smelling very strongly of tobacco, where the major sat in a big armchair, reading a newspaper, and smoking his pipe.

He welcomed them warmly, and the twins were soon on the best of terms with him.

They looked at all his curiosities, and he had many of them, from stuffed snakes and scorpions in spirit to Japanese dogs and picture-books ; and he told them many a story of his past life in the Queen's service.

" I sometimes say to myself, ' Jack Thomas, is this old hulk who goes creeping round the castle walls in the sunshine, with only the gossip of a tiny community to amuse him, the same individual as " Jolly Jack," who kept the messroom in roars of laughter at his wit and escapades, and was never so happy as when he was engaged in some dangerous sortie or expedition ? '

Tea with the Major

Ah, well, it is what all of us will come to some day; your day will be a little later than mine, but it will come."

"Don't you like being old?" asked Berry, with interest; "I think you look very nice with your white hair and your red coat."

"I am not very old yet," replied the major, holding his head up well as he spoke; "but gout and rheumatism plague my life out, and make me as helpless as a baby; and it is a dreary life under the shadow of this old castle. I feel like some old race horse put out to graze for the remainder of his life in a small green paddock."

"But you may not be here for many years," said Guy, reflectively; "not many days, perhaps."

"What do you mean, boy?"

And the major's tone was a little cross.

"If Jesus came down from heaven this week, you wouldn't be here much longer. He may be coming very soon, mayn't He?"

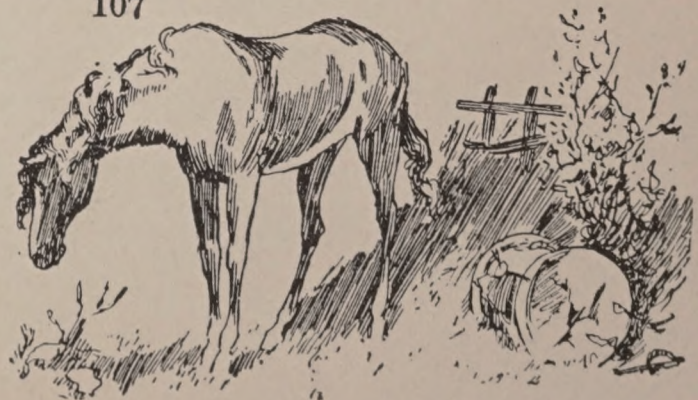
Major Thomas stared at Guy and puffed away at his pipe without replying for a minute, then he said,—

"When I was quartered in Bombay many years ago, I came across a missionary who was an enthusiast over that subject. I used to draw him out for the fun of the thing. I believe he never went to bed any night without expecting to hear the last trump sound. I don't know if he is alive or dead now. Poor old chap, I should think time has shown him his error. Who has been deluding you with such notions? You'll waste your time and thoughts by believing in it."

"Don't you believe Jesus will come very soon?" asked Berry, with a perplexed face.

"Does it look like it? People have been expecting it hundreds of years, and yet to-day we are as far off as ever from it."

"Ah! but you know why Jesus is waiting," put in Guy, with a flushed, excited face. "Mr. Curate told me he



A Puzzling Pair

thought it was the heathen that are keeping Him waiting. He wants more of them told about Him before He comes, and people are so slow doing it. If I was a man, I would like to go out to them, I think."

"Oh, Guy, you're going to paint pictures!" exclaimed Berry.

"I don't think I shall ever paint now."

Guy's tone was somewhat gloomy; then he turned to his more interesting theme.

"But, of course, Major Thomas, the last person may be got ready to-morrow, and then Jesus won't wait any longer, will He? Wouldn't you like to see Him come down in the clouds?"

The major shook his head.

"I don't go in for such things," he said; "it is time enough to think about them when you come to die."

"But Jesus may come before we die, and then what?" questioned Berry, a little anxiously.

The major changed the subject promptly, and began telling them one of his wonderful stories, to which they gave their breathless attention.

Tea was brought in presently, and the twins' eyes shone at the plates of pink and white biscuits, and cakes of all kinds that were placed before them.

"I suppose," said Berry, thoughtfully, "when you haven't visitors to tea, you invite your old man in to have tea with you."

The major laughed. "My man would as soon think of having tea with Her Majesty! No, no; if I don't have visitors, I am alone. I'm a lonely old man. Aren't you sorry for me?"

"He's almost as bad as Taffyraggy," whispered Berry to Guy; then she added aloud, "Well, if you like to ask us to tea pretty often, we shall like to come, sha'n't we, Guy? because there's nothing in the world we like better than going out to tea. It's lovely!"



Tea with the Major

The major said he would think about it. He had no difficulty in entertaining his little visitors, for their tongues rattled on at a greater pace than his own. They told him of their home, and their stepmother, and begged him to come and see them.

"But what will your father say to an old soldier in a red coat limping up to his door one day, and asking for a night's lodging?"

"O! you mustn't come like that," said Guy. "The most exciting way is to come across the sea like Miss Marchmount did. And you must get shipwrecked just by the rocks opposite our house. That's a splendid way of coming. The guns go off and the fireworks go up, and crowds of people come down to the beach to see you, and then you'll be carried up our garden in a blanket, and Berry and I will come and see you when you're in bed."

"A most enticing prospect! What if I shouldn't be able to manage the shipwreck properly, and get drowned in sight of you?"

"Oh! not many people do that, because we have got our lifeboat, and that always saves everybody."

"I'm afraid I wouldn't like to risk it. No; I am too old to go through such exciting adventures. I must stay by my own fireside, and get kind friends to take pity on me, and come in for a chat."

A bright idea struck Berry.

"Couldn't you get a stepmother—I mean a new wife, like father has? He said he used to be very lonely, but she always sits in his study with him when he wants her, and she is really very nice."

"Yes, get a lady to come and be your wife," put in Guy, eagerly. "Perhaps Miss Marchmount would come. Shall I ask her?"

The major lay back in his chair, and laughed till he was purple in the face.



A Puzzling Pair

“Alicia Marchmount! Ha! ha! by all means ask her; say it's your own suggestion, and tell me what she says. She would feel flattered at the idea. She and I have many a passage at arms, and I fancy we would keep any place lively between us. Of all willful, obstinate, self-opinionated women with a temper and tongue as—Hullo! There are the gates opening! Have you seen the Queen yet? No? Come along, she'll be driving past here in a minute.”

Out of the house flew the children, their host hobbling after them; and along the drive in front in an open carriage came Her Majesty. Not many people were about, and as the old major slowly lifted his cocked hat, Guy in his excitement waved his cap aloft and cried out at the top of his voice, “God save the Queen.”

A slight bow and smile were given in response to this shrill greeting, and Guy was beside himself with joy and delight.

Not so Berry: she looked after the carriage with disapproval stamped on her face.

“When I grow up into a rich lady, if I ever get to be a Queen,” she said, emphatically, “I shall never wear a bonnet like everybody else, but I shall have my crown on, and I shall have a gold carriage with red velvet seats, and twenty horses to draw me. I don't think the Queen looks proper!”

“Oh, Berry! how wicked of you! The Queen is the best and greatest and goodest person in the world, isn't she?” Guy said, turning to Major Thomas, his little frame still quivering with excitement; “and she smiled at me herself—oh, I wish I could draw her properly!”

“I've fought many a battle for her, God bless her!” said the major, in a husky voice, “and it will be a dark day for England when she is taken from us.”

“Guy has drawn the Queen in his picture,” Berry said, “with a crown on her head. She is going up in the air to meet Jesus. Wouldn't you like to see Guy's picture, Major Thomas? It is a lovely big one, and he will put you in it, I expect.”



Tea with the Major

Guy looked uncomfortable. "It's a picture I'm trying to draw," he said by way of explaining; "it is about Jesus coming again, and I'm making the people coming down from heaven and the people going up—but I don't think I shall ever finish it now."

His lip quivered and he turned his head away. Berry added eagerly, "He is afraid it isn't well done, but I think it's lovely—there are such a lot of people in it. I'll bring it over to you and show it to you, Major Thomas, I've got it safely myself, for I'm afraid of Guy's tearing it up. I'll bring it and show you to-morrow."

"You sha'n't show it to Major Thomas, it is my picture!"

"I shall if I like."

"You sha'n't, I say!" Guy's tone was angry. Berry looked at him rather queerly with a twinkle in her eyes. "I shall," she repeated; "and you won't be able to say nothing to me, because of your text. I think you're forgetting it."

Guy's face fell at once, and Berry continued with a little triumph in her tone. "You see his text was, this morning, 'The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle,' so he won't be able to fight me, will he, Major Thomas? He is one of God's servants, you know."

"And what about you?" asked the major, in rather a puzzled tone.

"Oh, I'm going to be one some day. And when I'm one of God's servants, I'll be a much better one than Guy is. He is always forgetting his texts. I remember them much the best!"

"I think it's time to go home," said Guy, discreetly changing the subject, and he led his sister off by the hand, after promising the major to come and see him again very soon.

Berry did not forget her resolve to show the major the wonderful picture, and when Guy was deeply engaged in a book the next day, she crept off and met their new friend walking out toward the North Terrace. Nothing daunted, with the roll of paper tucked safely under her arm, she accom-



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panied him thither, and insisted upon his sitting down on a seat there, and looking at the wonderful production. He was sufficiently interested in it to satisfy her, and informed her he had never seen such a marvelous representation in his life.

"Yes," assented Berry; "Guy is going to be a great artist one day; but it's the beautiful church here and all the grave figures and the windows that make him feel so uncomfortable because he can't draw them. But Canon Marchmont says he will draw if he learns properly, and he bought him a drawing-book yesterday. And if Guy copies all the things in it, he says he will give him five shillings for it, so Guy is going to try hard."

"And what will he do with the five shillings? Spend it in jam tarts?"

"I'm drefffully afraid he will send it to the heathen. He says he will, and I don't know how he'll get it taken to them, for Mr. Curate sent it to them last time; but we'll have to send it ourselves now, because Mr. Curate is in heaven. Can you send five shillings in a letter, Major Thomas? Will it go?"

"You can send it in a postal order or stamps," said the major, a little absently.

Berry said no more on the subject, only went back to the much-prized picture, and described the different characters in it.

"You see, there's room at the bottom for one or two more people. I should like him to draw you and me, wouldn't you? He says he won't draw me till I'm ready, for it wouldn't be true."

"And it wouldn't be true of me," said the major, with a comical shake of the head. "I think you and I are best out of that crowd of saints."

"But you're ready, aren't you?" questioned the little girl, with large, wondering eyes. "I mean to be very soon, you know; only such a lot of things keep happening that it makes me feel too busy."

Tea with the Major

“And what does ‘getting ready’ comprise?” asked the old man, with a smile.

“I don’t understand you.”

“How are you going to get ready?”

Berry pondered thoughtfully. “Guy says it’s getting alone with God, and—and letting Him make you ready. I—I forget quite how Guy did it. I think he was very sorry for his sins, though he didn’t cry.”

There was a pause. The old major had been carrying on the conversation more in jest than in earnest; but now he walked to the parapet, and leaning his arms on the old stone wall, looked across the misty landscape before him in silence.

Berry came up by his side and, stretching up on tiptoe, peeped over too.

“It’s a beautiful garden down there, and is that the sea over there?”

“No—the river.”

“And where’s the sea?”

“We are not near the sea.”

“But it must be somewhere. Motherkin teaches us in our jography that the sea is all round England, and this is England, isn’t it?”

“We’re out of sight and sound of it,” said the major, confronting her puzzled little face with a laugh.

“I can’t understand where it is,” said Berry, with a shake of her curly head, after some deep thought; “it must be round the corner somewhere.”

“So it is—‘round the corner somewhere’!”

And Berry could get no more information out of the major.





Chapter XIV

HOME AGAIN

THE days that followed were delightful ones to the children; they were never tired of wandering about the castle precincts. They were introduced to the Round Tower, and mounted to the very top, where they were quite awed by the far-away counties that they saw; they became great friends with the soldiers on sentry, and with the vergers in the chapel; they visited the Curfew Tower and the Royal Stables, and were finally entranced by being invited into the "Queen's Castle," as they called it, by Beaton's sister, who was one of the royal housemaids. She good-naturedly took them through the kitchens, let them peep into various staterooms, and even showed them the very room in which the Queen dined. Berry's little heart was filled with the grandeur and solemnity of it all, but Guy was not so much impressed.

"It isn't like the church," he kept repeating; "that is much more beautiful!"

But when they saw the very chair the Queen was going to sit in, Guy knelt down of his own accord and kissed the cushion very softly.

"The Queen will sit on my kiss to-night," he said in his quaint fashion. "I've left her my kiss and my love!"

Home Again

Miss Marchmount was never tired of hearing their experiences, and the Canon himself was fast losing his dread and dislike of children. The very independence and freedom with which they wandered about, saved them from getting into mischief. If it was a wet day, they could still play in the cloisters or roam about the chapel, and they very often visited old Major Thomas.

Guy was working away with a will at his drawing, and it was a proud moment of his life when the Canon laid two new half-crowns in his small palm, and told him he had shown by perseverance and application that he was in earnest about his profession.

"Do you think I shall really be an artist when I grow up?" questioned the boy, with the first hopeful smile about his lips for many a day.

"You have talent, work hard, and begin from the bottom of the ladder. You will do great things yet!"

And then Mr. Forrester wrote, saying his business was over in London, and he would come to take them home.

The day before he arrived the twins went out into the town, Guy with an envelope clutched tightly in one hand, and a shilling in the other; Berry was also the happy possessor of a shilling. Miss Marchmount had been the giver, and she made an express stipulation that the shillings were to be spent before they went home.

"Now, first, I'll send off my money to the heathen," said Guy.

It was a serious business. No grown-up person was consulted, and wide-awake as the twins were on most subjects, their ignorance was great on this one. No one had ever read or talked to them about missions, and only the few stray words from Mr. Grant had opened their eyes to the fact that there were many people living out of sound and sight of the Gospel.

More than an hour was spent in the composition of the



A Puzzling Pair

letter, but finally it was written out in Guy's best round hand, and Berry as usual had been the dictator.

"MY DEAR HEATHEN,—

"I hope you are quite well. I send you five shillings to buy some Bibles, and to get some missionaries to come to you. I hope you will get ready for Jesus as quick as you can, because I want Him to come down from Heaven again, and we think He is waiting for you. Berry sends her love, and I send mine.

"Your loving friend,

"GUY."

The five shillings had been wrapped in paper and safely tucked inside the letter. A stamp had been begged from Beaton, and then the most important part of all—the address on the envelope was taken in hand.

"Where do they live?" Guy asked his sister, perplexedly. Berry knitted her brows. "Won't 'The World' find them?"

"I don't think it will. You see we live in the world and they don't live near us."

"I know;" and Berry capered up and down in delight at her inspiration. "Write—'The other side of the sea'—that's where they live, I heard father say so."

So the envelope was addressed as following,—

"The Heathen,

"The Other Side of the Sea,

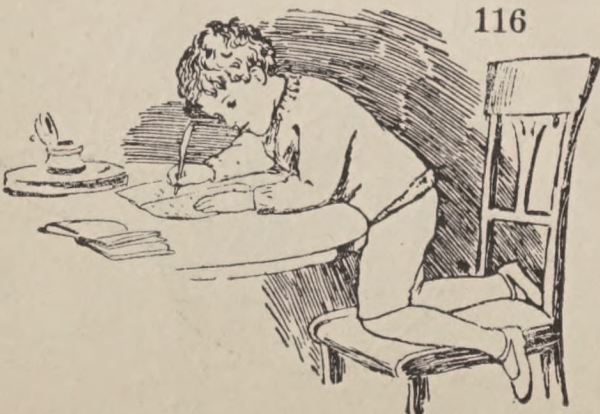
"The World."

And with this in hand, the twins made their way to the General Post Office.

"Let me put it in the box," pleaded Berry. Guy hesitated, then gave his precious packet into her hand, and it was dropped with a thud into the great box.

"I hope they'll get it very soon," said Guy, heaving a sigh; "and I do hope they will be pleased with it."

"O' course they will, and p'raps they'll write back," re-



Home Again

sponded Berry; "now let us spend our shillings. I'm so glad they aren't going to the heathen."

They flattened their noses against many shop windows that day, discussing what they could buy. They had quite made up their minds that they must take back some presents for Thomas and Matty and their stepmother, but the purchases required thought and care.

"It's as bad as sums," lamented Berry. "If I spend sixpence on motherkin, and fourpence on Matty, what will there be left for Thomas, Guy?"

"Twopence," her brother replied, with alacrity.

"Oh! that's quite enough for him; let us come into the toy-shop, Guy," and Berry demanded breathlessly of the shopwoman, "I want a sixpenny present, and a fourpenny present, and a twopenny one!"

After some consultation, Berry invested in a wool mat for her stepmother; a china mug with "For a Good Child," written in gilt letters across it, for Matty; and a whistle and chain for Thomas.

Guy was more particular, and sorely tried the shopwoman's patience.

"I want something really pretty for motherkin. Your things cost such a lot of money, I think I'll get three books."

"Then you must go to another shop," said the woman, and she dismissed them rather curtly.

It was difficult to find a bookseller's in the town, and Guy found that books were expensive items. He came out of the shops very disconsolately, but at last he was successful. A little text-book, with a text for every day in the month, for his stepmother, a guide-book of the castle for Thomas, and a colored picture-book, entitled *A Visit to the Zoo*, for Matty; the latter being chosen because of Matty's fondness for all dumb animals.

Then they marched back triumphantly to Miss Marchmount, and showed her their purchases. She highly approved of them.



A Puzzling Pair

“And what will you take back with you as remembrances of this place for yourselves?”

The children considered.

“I sha’n’t want nothing to make me remember it,” said Guy, solemnly. “If I shut my eyes, I can always see the church, with the candles and the banners, and the high dark arches, and the stone people lying on the top of their graves.”

“And don’t you see me in my house? Is the chapel the only thing you will want to remember?”

“I’ll remember you,” put in Berry, quickly. “I’ll think of you in your nightcap, like I saw you the other morning when you were turning the cat out of your room!”

Miss Marchmount changed the subject.

Guy and Berry paid a farewell visit to the old major, who was truly sorry to part with them, and, somehow or other, Guy found himself confiding to him the history of the letter to the heathen. The major listened gravely and attentively, then rose from his seat and opened a locked drawer in his writing-table. From thence he took a stiff, crackling piece of paper, enclosed it in a sheet of writing paper, and bade Guy write on it, in his round, childish hand, “For missions abroad. In remembrance of a lesson taught.”

And this was placed in an envelope and directed to a well-known missionary society.

Guy and Berry were rather puzzled with this proceeding, and wanted to know the meaning of it.

But the major would not explain.

“Jolly Jack is a puzzle to himself, sometimes,” he said; and nothing more could be got out of him.

The next day brought Mr. Forrester, who slept a night at Canon Marchmount’s, and took away his little son and daughter early the next morning.

Every one was sorry to lose them: and, excited as they were at the prospect of getting home again, the children had many regrets at leaving. Guy stole into the chapel just be-



Home Again

fore they went, and feasted his eyes and heart there for the last time. Before coming out, he knelt down in a corner, and prayed softly: "Oh, God, help me to grow up a good man, and teach me how to paint beautiful pictures, so that I can send all my money to the heathen."

And then he came away comforted.

It was late when they reached home, but Mrs. Forrester was awaiting them with cheery fires and comforts, and seemed like a child herself with delight at getting her husband and the children back again.

"You mustn't all go away together ever again," she said, laughing, as she caressed the twins, and turned a radiant face toward her husband. "Though Matty and I have been having a grand turn-out and cleaning, I have felt most forlorn without you."

The twins' quick eyes noted many improvements, but they were delighted most of all with their nursery upstairs. Fresh paper on the walls, bright rugs on the floor, and red curtains to the window made a perfect transformation, and they gazed at it in wonder.

"You're like Cinderella's fairy godmother," said Berry, turning to her stepmother with shining eyes.

"You see, it is my duty," Mrs. Forrester said, laughing, as her husband as well as his children could not help remarking on the improved condition of the house. "You must remember, Warwick, you told me frankly that you brought me here to better your condition. If I fail to do this, I may lose my place."

"Oh, father mustn't never send you away," exclaimed Guy, not seeing the fun that was lurking in his stepmother's eyes. "Berry and I really couldn't live without you; it was horrid before you came."

Mr. Forrester laid his hand on his wife's shoulder. "I don't think I could live without you now," he said, but something in his tone made Mrs. Forrester's eyes fill with tears, and she turned away to hide her emotion.



A Puzzling Pair

Matty and Thomas were keenly interested in hearing the twins' experiences away, and Berry was full of airs and graces as she recounted them.

"Of course we saw the Queen; why, we were living in the same house with her—in her castle we were, and kings and queens were buried in their graves all round us. When we went to church Guy and I sat in a throne—all nice people sit in thrones—and there was a crown and sword and flag above each one. We had blue cushions to put our Prayer-books on, and our books were as big as motherkin's work-table! All the houses are built like churches, and we had painted windows, and funny little figures all cut out on the walls and fireplace. Guy and I went to tea very often with a grand old soldier there—a great friend of the Queen's. He had been very good to her many years ago; he had fought a big battle for her, and so she loves him and takes care of him. And he had a servant much taller and straighter than you, Thomas, who always called me 'Miss' and was ready to open the door for me."



Berry stopped for breath, and Guy continued, "But, oh, Thomas, you should have heard the boys sing in church; it was like angels singing—and they are all dressed in clergymen's white gowns. And then there is a round tower that used to be a prison, and you can walk along the top of the castle walls. It's a lovely place, and has always been full of kings and queens."

Thomas shook his head doubtfully. "Castles and kings and queens all be vanity of vanities, and as to they young scamps of boys a-standin' up and singin' the prayers—well, 'tis all from Rome! I've heerd tell on sich things, and it maketh I fair sick to think on't. Ye've had your heads stuffed with voolishness and sin, and 'tis to be hoped ye'll set to work to forget it."

Still, the old servants were glad to have the children back again, and were very pleased with their presents. Mrs. For-

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rester found that both her pupils were more diligent and attentive than in times past, and Guy was now quite willing for her to teach him the rudiments of drawing, an offer which he had rejected with scorn before.

“You see, motherkin, I’ve found out that I can’t draw properly a bit, and I want to be a perfect artist when I grow up.”

“And I want to know about all the kings and queens that ever lived,” said Berry; “so if history tells about them, I’ll learn history, motherkin.”

But Berry was sorely grieved at Guy’s contempt for all his former handiwork. She guarded with a jealous care the picture of the “Second Coming,” and refused to tell Guy where she kept it.

“You sha’n’t burn it or tear it up; I love it,” she would say. And one afternoon, after he had pressed her sorely to reveal its hiding-place, she crept along the west passage, and slipped it carefully under the locked door of “Taffyraggy’s” room.

“There, Taffyraggy,” she whispered through the keyhole, “you keep that picture safe for me, and don’t tell Guy where it is. It will be very nice for you to look at if you want something to do.”





Chapter XV

UNDER THE RUINS

SPRING came, and with it many improvements to the old Manor House ; the sea wall was repaired, several rooms painted and papered, and Mrs. Forrester was now spending a good deal of time in gardening. Crocuses and snowdrops were springing up round the old shrubberies, and two or three bright beds of tulips and hyacinths close to the house filled the air with their sweet fragrance. In a large apron and leather gloves Mrs. Forrester worked away ; sometimes superintending a rough village lad, who now came for several hours a day ; sometimes pressing the twins into her service ; and weeding, hoeing and sweeping with all the energy and briskness of her nature.

It was a happy life ! Old Matty, listening to her mistress's ringing laugh, and the children's eager voices, would often pause in her work and say to her spouse, " Ay, Tummas, the better times has come at last, an' this old deserted place be goin' to be made into a respectable habitation, surely ! "

But there was still much to be done, and the west wing of the house gave Mrs. Forrester many an anxious thought. When the March gales and spring tides set in, she begged her husband to have it repaired.

Under the Ruins

"Not this year, my dear," was his reply; "we do not use that part of the house at all, we can spend no more money on repairs at present."

"But it is just the corner of the house that encounters the full force of all the storms," she urged; "I lie awake at night thinking that if it fell, it would perhaps bring our part with it. I assure you, Warwick, I was looking up at it yesterday morning and I absolutely saw a part of it rock in the fury of the wind."

"You are nervous about it."

"Yes, I own I am. I have a strange feeling sometimes that it will work us harm, and I cannot shake it off."

Mr. Forrester laughed in his easy-going way, and refused to discuss the subject any more.

It was only a week after this conversation took place that Guy and Berry were engaged in a secret business in that very part of the house.

It was a wet and stormy day; the waves were lashing and roaring in fury outside, and the wind was making one of its terrific onslaughts on the old house. Mrs. Forrester was sitting with her husband in his study, and the children were playing together in the morning-room. In the midst of a lively game, Guy suddenly said to his sister, "Berry, where's my picture?"

Berry pursed up her little lips and looked full of mischief. "What do you want it for?"

"It's my picture, and I can do what I like with it!" Guy responded, with dignity.

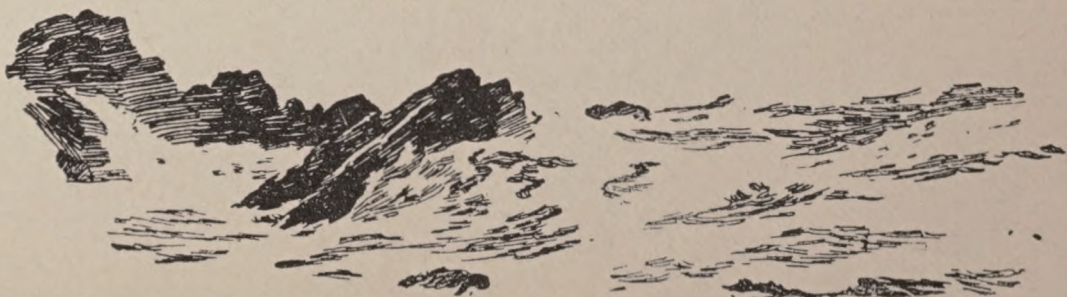
"Well, you can't never have it again, I've given it away."

"Who to?"

A hot flush mounted in Guy's cheeks, and his eyes sparkled angrily.

"Oh, just a friend of mine," retorted Berry, with an air of great indifference.

"You've no business to give my picture to any one. You've stoled it from me, and you're a thief!"



A Puzzling Pair



"Will you draw me in it if I give it back to you?"

Guy's rising ire suddenly disappeared.

"No," he replied, "because you aren't ready."

Berry was silent for a minute, then she asked, "Will you promise not to hurt it if I tell you where it is?"

"Yes."

"Taffyraggy has got it."

Guy opened his eyes in astonishment.

"Have you been inside that room?" he asked.

"No; but I pushed it under the door as far as ever I could."

Guy went to the window, and stood looking out at the lashing rain reflectively. At last he said in a serious tone, "I sometimes think I ought to be a missionary instead of an artist when I grow up. I don't want to be, you know; but I think I ought to be."

"Oh, that would be dreadful," said Berry, in an awe-struck voice. "What should I do if you were to be a missionary? I couldn't help you with that, and I could help you to draw pictures."

"Perhaps Jesus will come soon, and then I sha'n't be either," continued Guy, gazing up at the rolling clouds overhead with a wistful, anxious look; "but if He doesn't come soon, I know the reason why, Berry."

"Because I'm not ready for Him," said the little maiden, promptly.

"No," said Guy, with severity; "He won't wait for you, because you know all about Him, and only make excuses not to be ready. But it's because there are some heathen waiting to be told about Jesus, and no one will go and tell them. And if I don't go and tell them, p'raps no one else will. Mr. Curate used to talk a lot about it, but I've never thought about it much till now, and sometimes when I'm in bed I think I hear God saying, 'If Guy won't be a missionary those heathen won't hear how to get ready, and I shall have to wait till another little boy much younger than he is grows up to do it.'"

Under the Ruins

But I try not to listen, for I'd much rather paint pictures, and then I get very miserable, and I think it's no good to watch out for Jesus coming, if I don't want to help Him to come quick ! ”

“ But you can't go to the heathen now,” objected Berry ; “ you're much too little, they wouldn't listen to you.”

Guy sighed. “ I'm growing,” he said, a little sadly ; “ and I feel God doesn't care about my pictures. I was thinking— I've written them one letter, and I wonder if I could write them another, just to tell them about Jesus.”

“ Yes,” said Berry, clapping her hands with delight ; “ o' course we'll do that, and send it by the postman.”

Then changing the subject with one of her swift transitions of mood, she added : “ Let us come up and have a talk with Taffyraggy now, and see how he likes your picture.”

Guy was willing. He shook off his soberness, and trotted upstairs as fast as he could go. When at the door, he turned to his sister.

“ I want my picture first.”

“ Let us pull it out.”

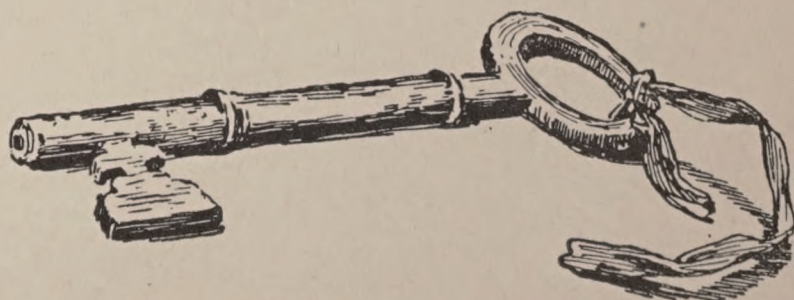
But this was easier said than done. Though they lay flat down on the floor, and peered and poked under the door, no piece of paper could be seen or felt. At last Berry rose to her feet.

“ I know where Thomas keeps the key. It hangs up with his big bunch in the harness-room. He showed it to me the other day, and it has a piece of red tape tied to it. I'll go and get it, and we'll open the door and get the picture out.”

“ Father won't like it,” objected Guy, his conscience pricking him at once.

“ Oh, he won't mind, it's only for very purtickler business we're going in.”

Berry darted downstairs, and Guy leaned against the door feeling uncomfortable and ill at ease. When his sister returned a little time later, breathless and triumphant as she held out the key, he began to expostulate,—



A Puzzling Pair

"Father told us not to go inside."

"That was years ago, before motherkin came. He won't mind just for once."

"I'll tell him directly we've done it," murmured Guy, yielding to the temptation; and a minute after the key was turned, the door pushed open, and the twins found themselves in a gloomy, deserted lumber room, full of dust and cobwebs.

They were full of curiosity and interest at once.

"Look, Guy, there's an old armchair. That's where Taffyraggy sits to smoke his pipe; he doesn't keep his room very clean. Where do you think he is?"

Berry did not raise her voice above a whisper. Their make-believe was at times a reality to her, and she seemed to feel the presence of their invisible friend in the room.

"He's gone out for a walk," said Guy, boldly. "Why, Berry, just look at my picture; some one has been tearing it to pieces!"

"It is either Taffyraggy, or the rats and mice who have been eating it up," said Berry, in real distress as she lifted from the dusty floor only some tattered fragments of the much-prized picture.

Guy gazed at it sorrowfully, and when Berry said penitently, with tears in her eyes, "Oh, do forgive me, Guy, dear; I'm dreffully sorry, it's all my fault, and I did hope Taffyraggy would take care of it," he responded, gloomily. "It took me the longest time of all my pictures, but it doesn't matter, it wasn't drawn properly."

Berry smoothed out the fragments carefully, and put them in her pocket; then the spirit of adventure seizing them, they walked to the other end of the room where Guy tried to open a small door.

"Where does it lead?" asked Berry.

"Father showed me once; down a little staircase into another room which has an underground passage to the sea."

"Oh, do let us go, it will be such fun!"



Under the Ruins

They forgot their father's command in the excitement of the moment; the door, after a great deal of tugging and pushing swung open, and disclosed as Guy had said, a narrow stone staircase. Down this they carefully crept. It was nearly dark but neither of them feared darkness, and when they at last reached the bottom and found themselves in a low, long room, they were delighted. The windows were covered with ivy, and the storm outside increasing in violence, seemed as if it were concentrating its strength against this part of the house.

"Here's a little window to look out, Berry! do you see, we are quite near the sea here. What a noise the wind is making. It seems to shake the floor. I think p'raps we had better go upstairs again."

"But just show me where this room leads out to the sea."

Guy pointed to another door, with great gaps in the stonework round it, and nothing would satisfy Berry until she had tried to open it. Whether it was the dislodging of some stones round the door, or whether it was a fresh onslaught of the gale, no one ever knew; but there was a rushing sound of loose stones overhead, an agonized cry from Berry, a blast of wind rushing in, and then an awful crashing of timber, an avalanche of stones, and a sound like a terrific explosion as the floor above gave way, and the corner of the west wing fell in ruins to the ground.

Mrs. Forrester started up in fright as she sat writing in the study.

"What is it?" she cried, trembling from head to foot. "Oh Warwick, the house is falling."

"It is the west wing, I am afraid," said Mr. Forrester, rushing to the door. Thomas and Matty appeared with scared faces in the hall, and followed their master out in the driving rain to view the wing from outside.

Mrs. Forrester sought the children for fear they should be frightened, but nowhere could they be found.



A Puzzling Pair

When her husband returned to the house a short time after, she met him with a white, anxious face.

"The children, Warwick! I can't find them anywhere."

"My dear, you need not be alarmed about them—hiding somewhere, I suppose—it is the west turret that has fallen; and the room above and below have been locked up for years, there is no fear of the children being near the spot. I am thankful it is no worse. I will have some men round tomorrow to see the extent of the mischief."

Mr. Forrester entered his study and was soon absorbed in his writing again; whilst his wife aided by Matty searched high and low for the twins.

Meanwhile surrounded by bricks and mortar and fallen beams, lay two little unconscious figures miraculously preserved from being buried alive by an old oak beam caught midway across the room, and under which they both had space to stand upright.

Guy was the first to come to himself; he had been only partially stunned, and Berry unhurt had fainted from fright. Creeping over to his sister Guy roused her by shaking her.

"Berry, Berry, are you dead?"

Berry opened her eyes and sat up. She looked quite bewildered and frightened.

"Are we dead and buried, Guy? Oh! what shall I do, I'm not ready to die."

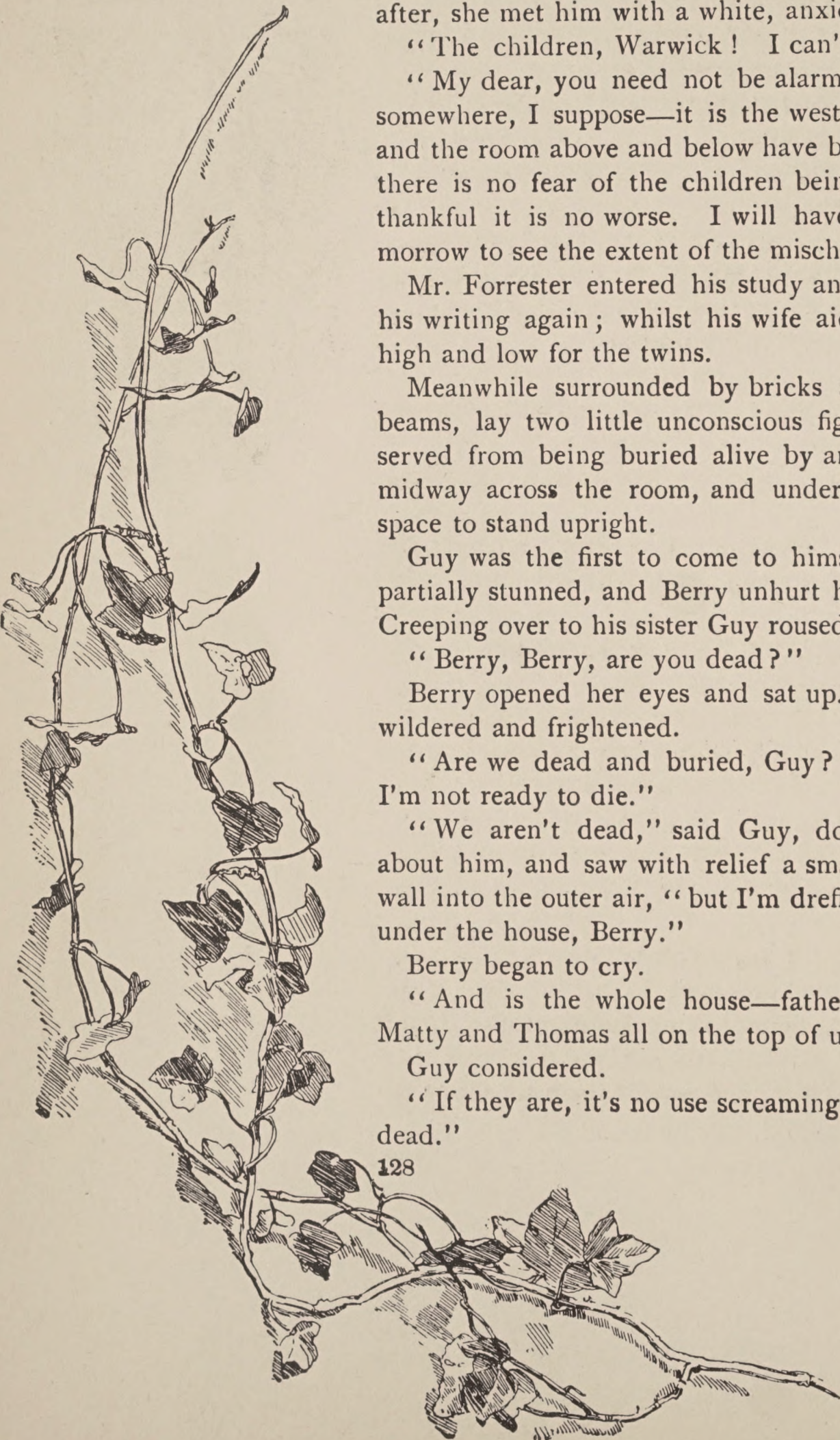
"We aren't dead," said Guy, doubtfully, as he peered about him, and saw with relief a small opening through the wall into the outer air, "but I'm dreffully afraid we're buried under the house, Berry."

Berry began to cry.

"And is the whole house—father and motherkin, and Matty and Thomas all on the top of us?" she sobbed.

Guy considered.

"If they are, it's no use screaming, for I expect they'll be dead."



Under the Ruins

"And sha'n't we never be got out forever and ever?" sobbed Berry in real fright.

"I think God will get us out somehow," said Guy, steadfastly, "we'll ask Him, Berry, shall we?"

"I don't expect He'll listen to me, because I won't get ready."

Guy knelt down by his sister.

"You must stop crying and fold your hands together and pray after me," he insisted.

Berry meekly obeyed, whispering as she wiped her eyes,—

"And tell God I promise faithful to be good if He will send an angel to take us out of this horrid grave!"

Very slowly and reverently Guy prayed.

"O God, please take us out, we're very uncomfable here, and we're sorry we were naughty and disobeyed father. Please forgive us, and don't let father and motherkin be killed, nor Matty, nor Thomas, nor Ginger, nor the kittens. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

"You've forgot what I told you," said Berry, reproachfully.

"You can pray that yourself, and ask God to make you ready now."

Berry looked thoughtful. "Will God hear me?"

"O' course He will."

The little girl closed her eyes tight. Her lids moved, but no word was uttered aloud. Guy stood and watched her, and when she got up from her knees, he asked anxiously, "What did you tell God?"

"I asked Him to make me ready and wash my sins away. Do you think He has done it?"

Guy nodded.

"And how soon will the angel come?"

"P'raps God won't send an angel."

"Oh, yes, He always does. Don't you remember Daniel in his den? I should think it was just like this, only there were raging lions round him, and wasn't there some one else in a pit?"



A Puzzling Pair

"Peter had an angel to bring him out of prison, but Joseph was in a pit, and no angel came to him."

"His brothers took him out, but we're in a much worse pit than he was. No one can get us out except an angel I'm sure!"

There was silence, both children sat down and with eager, excited faces waited and watched for a deliverer.

At last Berry gave a sigh. "I don't believe God has heard us."

"Oh, yes, He has, but it must take some time for an angel to come from heaven, Berry."

Time passed, minutes seemed hours to the imprisoned little ones, and at last Guy jumped up.

"P'raps God means us to try and get out ourselves, Berry. If I could climb up to that hole in the wall, I could see if we could get out there."

As he spoke he clambered up a heap of bricks, and catching hold of the beam above, swung himself up on it.

"You'll fall!" cried out Berry in horror.

But Guy had not clambered about the rocks and cliffs so much to no purpose. He slowly raised himself to a standing posture on the beam, and was just putting his head out of the opening, when the beam shifted its position a little, and with a scream he fell to the ground, a shower of loose bricks and dust accompanying him.

Berry rushed to help him up again, but he cried out in agony when she touched him,—

"Don't touch me! I think I've killed myself. Oh, my arm! My arm!"

His right arm was bent underneath him as he lay, and he seemed to have no power to move it.

Berry knelt down by him with round frightened eyes.

"Are you very hurt, Guy?"

"I'm dying, I know I am."

Berry's little face grew white with awe.



Under the Ruins

"Oh, don't, Guy dear, don't die. I must really die too if you do. Where does it hurt you?"

Guy only moaned, and his sister lifted up her voice in her distress, and screamed aloud for help.

Then after a few moments Guy spoke again,—

"I think Jesus will come for me soon like He did for Mr. Curate."

His voice sounded faint, and poor little Berry burst into tears.

"It's too bad of that angel to be so long on the way. He might have come by now!" she sobbed.

Silence fell, only Guy's moans and Berry's sobs were audible, and the darkness seemed to deepen.

Suddenly shouts and voices were heard, and Berry knew that help was at hand at last.





Chapter XVI

THE RESCUE

MRS. FORRESTER grew more and more alarmed as all her calls failed to produce any answer from the children ; and when she finally made her way along the unused passage to the west wing, and found the door ajar, with the key in the lock, her worst fears were realized.

“ Don’t go inside, mum ; it mayn’t be safe,” pleaded Matty.

Mrs. Forrester pushed the door open. She noticed that the flooring at the other end of the room had given way, and then stooping to the ground, she held out some scraps of paper to Matty’s bewildered gaze, with a cry of heart-broken distress.

“ They have been here. This is part of Guy’s picture. Call your master, Matty. They must be buried under the ruins.”

It seemed a long time before Mr. Forrester and Thomas appeared, but it was in reality only a few minutes, and Mr. Forrester was roused at last to a state of excitement that his wife had never seen in him before. They soon found it was useless to work from the upper story, and again made their way downstairs through the garden. Mrs. Forrester, with a set, white face, commenced at once to help in the removal of the

The Rescue

piles of stones that lay scattered around, while Matty flew to the nearest fishing quarters to seek help from the stalwart fishermen. Mr. Forrester and Thomas, with coats off and shirt sleeves rolled up, worked away with pickaxes and spades, only pausing now and again to shout out the names of the children, but for some time no success met their efforts, and Mrs. Forrester shuddered as she viewed the possibility of coming across the crushed and mangled remains of those two bonny children. And then, as several men came running up with shouts of "help at hand," Mr. Forrester heard a shrill little voice come up from below,—

"Father! motherkin! be quick. Guy is just dead!"

But a quarter of an hour then elapsed before the children could be rescued, so careful had they to be that they did not hurt the little ones with the loose stones falling. When Berry was taken out, she clung to her stepmother in an agony of fright and terror, and seemed almost beyond power of speech.

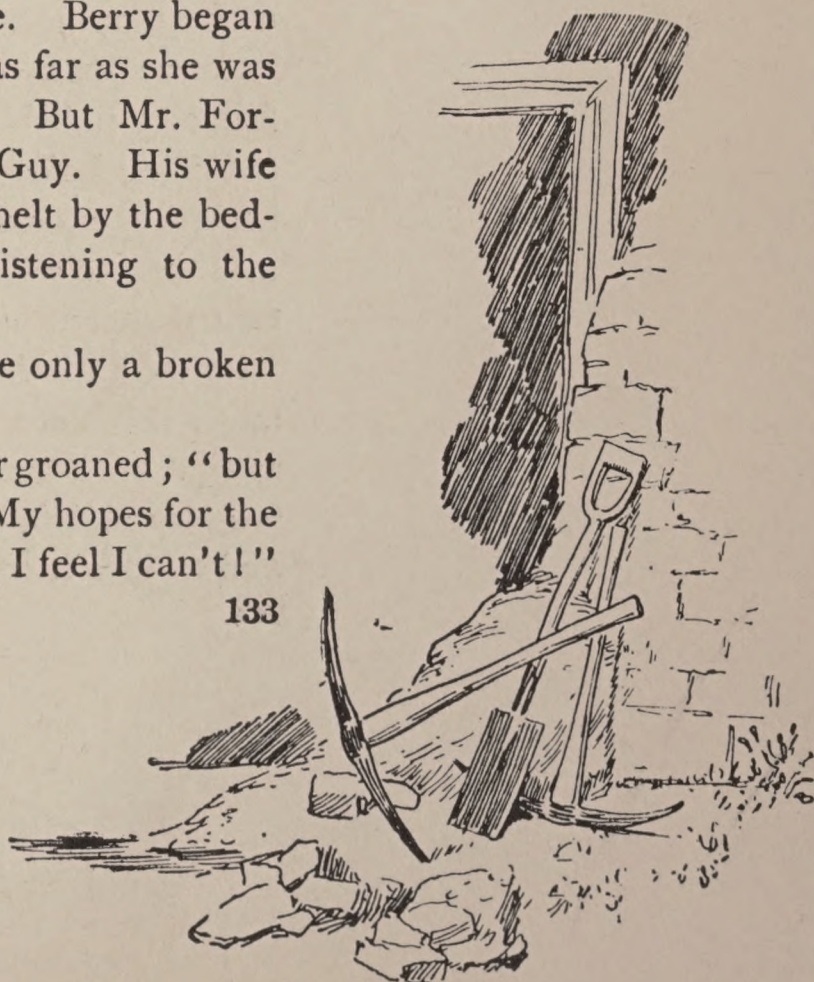
Mrs. Forrester carried her into the house, and put her at once to bed, while Mr. Forrester followed, bearing the unconscious form of his little son.

"His arm is broken," he said, shortly. "Thomas, bring the doctor at once."

It was some time before the doctor arrived, and the father watched by his child's bed in painful suspense. Berry began to recover after food and rest, and related, as far as she was able, the experiences of the last few hours. But Mr. Forrester could give no eye or ear to any but Guy. His wife touched him gently on the shoulder as he knelt by the bedside, watching the fluttering breath, and listening to the moans of his little son.

"We will not despair, Warwick; it may be only a broken limb."

"I have been a careless father," Mr. Forrester groaned; "but if God spares him to us, I will be different. My hopes for the future are bound up in him. Pray for his life; I feel I can't!"



A Puzzling Pair

For a moment Mrs. Forrester hesitated; then she knelt with her husband, and for the first time in her life prayed aloud that God would mercifully preserve and restore the injured boy.

The doctor came at last, and took a hopeful view of the case at once.

"It's a compound fracture of the arm, but that is his worst hurt, I think. Of course, he is bruised and shaken, but time and rest will mend that."

The arm was set and put in splints, and the pain of the setting restored Guy to consciousness.

"I think he will do well if you keep him quiet and free from excitement. Don't let him talk, and I will look in the first thing to-morrow morning."

These were the doctor's parting words. And Berry was, in consequence, taken to sleep in another room, whilst Mrs. Forrester installed herself at once as Guy's nurse.

Very anxious and trying were the days that followed. Guy had a good deal of fever, and, for the first week or two, he was not the best of patients. When Berry was allowed in to see him, he grew brighter, but his spirits fell considerably when she was absent, and he kept repeating to his step-mother, "I can't think why I don't die; I'm sure I'm much worse than Mr. Curate."

There was great concern and excitement amongst all the fisher population when they heard what had befallen the twins, and the first Sunday after the accident, Berry found herself the centre of an admiring crowd, after the meeting in the kitchen was over. She was delighted at her important position, and was quite equal to the occasion.

"Yes; Guy and me were buried alive, and father and motherkin and Thomas and Matty all helped to dig us up again. We were covered with brick-dust when we came up and Guy was nearly dead. He broke his arm in two, and the doctor had to join it together again. I screamed and screamed and



The Rescue

screamed for help. It was worse than Joseph's pit, and it was all dark, and stones kept tumbling down upon us. Father says it was a miracle, and, o' course, it was very wonderful we weren't killed dead at once; but God fetched us out safe because we asked Him to. Would you like to see a great piece of skin off my elbow where a stone scratched me?"

A small sleeve was tucked up, and a dimpled arm thrust out for inspection.

"There, noo, to think on't! An' the little maid been to death's door, and might a laid underground an' bin starved to a skillikon, if so be as my Bill a hadn't a run an' giv' a helpin' hand to get un out!"

"'Tis to be hoped," said Thomas, slowly shaking his head, "as they have bin raised to life agen fur the glory o' God. 'Twill make 'em think o' life an' death, an' of repentin' of all they giddy mischeevous ways."

Berry looked at Thomas with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Would you have been glad if we had been dead when you found us, Thomas? Would we have had a big funeral, do you think?"

"God forbid!" the old man said, solemnly. "I prayeth night an' day that your souls may be snatched as brands from the burnin', and I look to see both on ye grow up a good man and maid, an' a credit to our upbringing'."

"Guy is growing good now," said Berry, a little thoughtfully, "and I'm goin to be just like him. I'm never going to be naughty any more, Thomas, so you won't have any one to scold now."

But Thomas shook his head again very doubtfully at this statement.

Many were the inquiries at the Manor House after Guy, and his father's heart was touched and gratified to see what a place his little son held in the villagers' affections.

"Guy, darling, is anything troubling you?" asked Mrs. Forrester one day as she bent over the little invalid, who was



A Puzzling Pair

sitting in a big easy chair in her morning-room; "you have been heaving such big sighs that all the world might be on your shoulders. Tell me what is the matter with you? You will soon be running about in the garden again!"

Guy looked out upon the sunny lawn very wistfully, and then, with his soft eyes fixed earnestly on his stepmother's face, he said soberly,—

"Yes, I'm in a very great trouble, and I can't never forget it, but I don't talk of it except to Berry."

"And can't Berry comfort you?"

Mrs. Forrester never pressed the children for their confidences. She had respect for their childish secrets, and it was partly this trait in her character that endeared her to them.

"Motherkin never asks 'quisitive questions like Thomas and Matty," said Berry once; "she trusts us!"

Guy shook his head by way of reply to his stepmother.

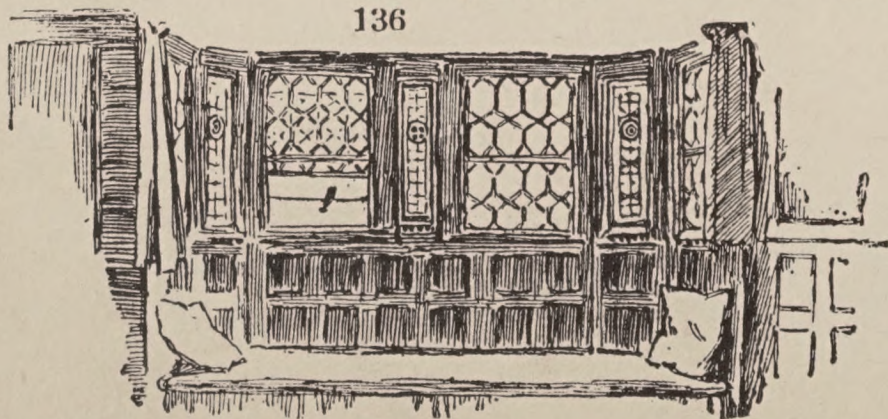
"Berry always changes round so, and I wish Mr. Curate was here, he would tell me."

Mrs. Forrester looked sympathetic; and then, laying his head on her shoulder, Guy opened his heart to her.

"I'm afraid I'm a very wicked boy, motherkin. I think God wants me to do something and I want to do another thing, and I think He broke my arm on purpose!"

"Why?" asked Mrs. Forrester.

"Well, you see, I always meant to be a grand artist, and I never like to change. The first trouble came to me when I was staying with Miss Marchmount. I found out then I couldn't draw a bit, and the Canon told me I should be years and years before I could make proper pictures. 'I would have to work very hard indeed,' he said. So I meant to, but when I wrote to the heathen to send them my money, I began to think more about them, and I wondered if I oughtn't to be a missionary instead. And then that made me feel very miserable indeed. You see, motherkin, Jesus Christ has never come yet, and I've been looking out for Him every day for



The Rescue

ever so long, and I s'pose it's just because He is waiting for the heathen—Mr. Curate said so. If I ought to go out as a missionary, it's no good learning to draw properly, is it? That's what I've been thinking a long time, but I didn't want to give up being an artist, I felt I couldn't really do it, and now you see God has punished me. He has broken my arm so that I shall never be able to draw again, and it makes me drefffully sorry to think I wasn't willing to go to the heathen my own self without His having to do that. It makes me feel God is angry with me."

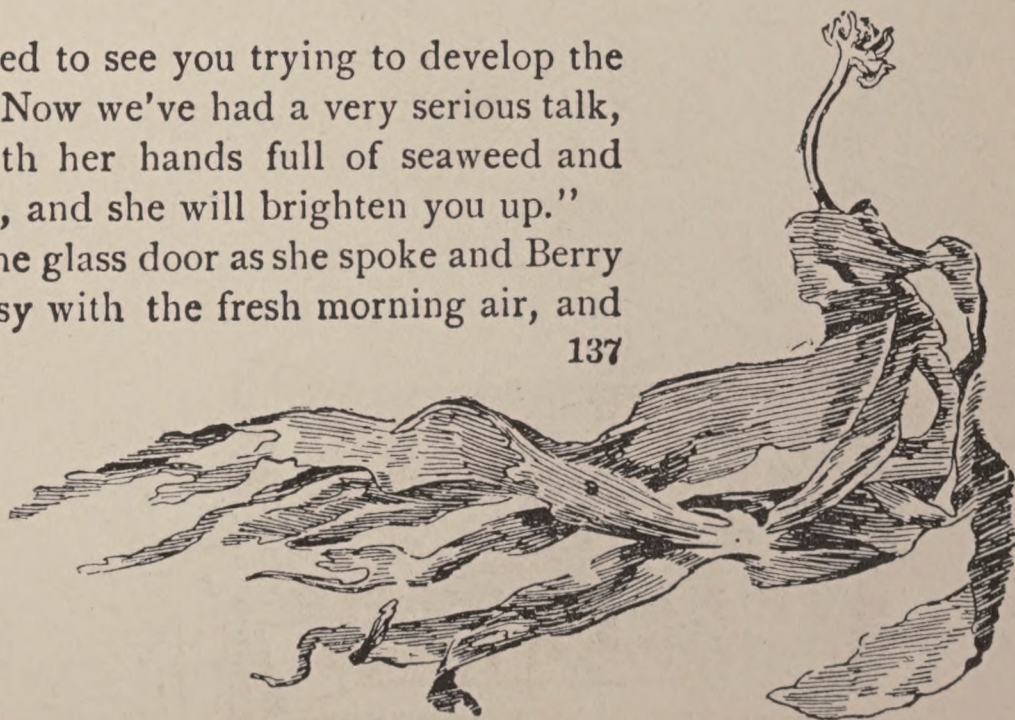
The boy's eyes were full of tears as he finished his story, and for a minute Mrs. Forrester did not speak. Then she said gently, "My dear child, you mustn't have such a self-torturing mind. Your arm is getting well fast, and in a few weeks you will be able to draw as well as ever. I don't know much about these things, but I am sure God wouldn't have given you your gift for drawing if He hadn't meant you to use it. There is time enough to think of going out to the heathen when you are a grown-up man. What you have to do now is to learn lessons, and be a happy good boy at home. And as to God punishing you by breaking your arm, I can only think how very good He has been in saving you and Berry from an awful death. You might have been crippled for life, and think how much worse that would have been!"

Guy brightened up at his stepmother's cheery view of the case.

"And you think God likes to see me drawing pictures, because you know I am His servant, and I want to do what He likes?"

"I am sure He is pleased to see you trying to develop the talent He has given you. Now we've had a very serious talk, and here comes Berry with her hands full of seaweed and shells. We will let her in, and she will brighten you up."

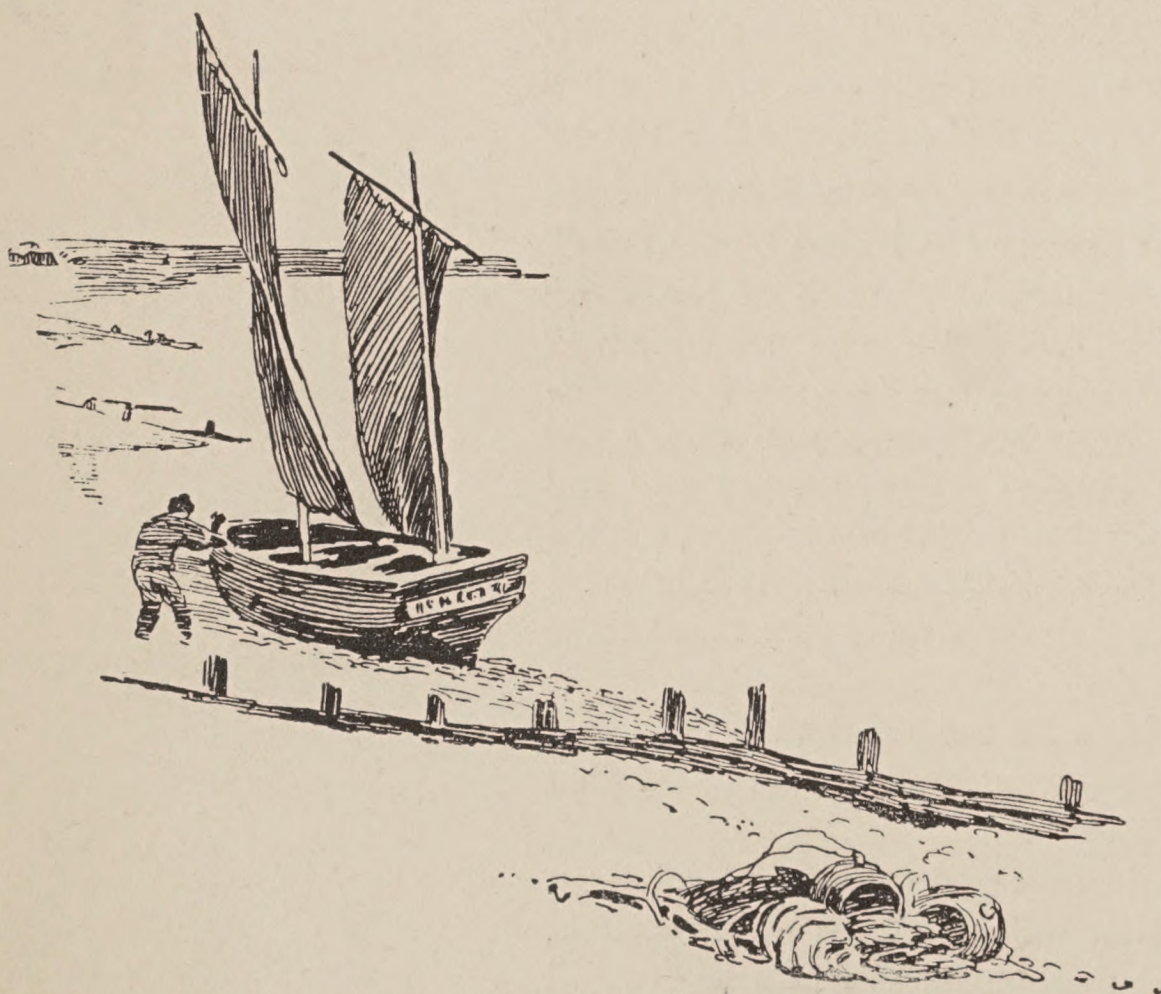
Mrs. Forrester opened the glass door as she spoke and Berry danced in, her cheeks rosy with the fresh morning air, and



A Puzzling Pair

her eyes sparkling with mischief. "You must get your old arm well, Guy, and come out of doors with me. I've been in Joe Carter's boat this morning, and look at my seaweed. Fancy! he wouldn't believe it was the mermaid's hair, and he said no one lived at the bottom of the sea! I told him he didn't know nothing at all if he didn't know that, and I asked him if he would let me make a big hole in the bottom of the boat so that we might sink down, down, down to the bottom of the sea, and find out all about it!"

Mrs. Forrester left the children together, relieved by Guy's ringing laugh, and eager belief in the wonders of the deep.



Chapter XVII

TWO LETTERS



IN a very short time Guy was running about, and though his arm was in splints, with the dexterity and ingenuity of childhood, it proved to be no detriment to all kinds of games and amusements. Berry was found one day with her right arm swathed in bandages and tied across her breast.

"Just to keep him company," she exclaimed, when asked the reason of it; "and to show him I can use my left hand quite as well as he can!"

One afternoon as Mrs. Forrester was writing letters in the morning room, Berry stole up to her with a mysterious air.

"Are your letters going to the post, motherkin?" she asked, "because Guy and me have a letter to send."

"Have you, really?" Mrs. Forrester said, turning round from her writing with a smile; "and may I ask to whom you have been writing?"

"It's a very particular letter, indeed," said Berry, holding it under her pinafore and regarding her stepmother rather critically; "if you won't laugh I will show it to you, because Guy said I could; we've been writing it on the beach all the afternoon, but it's a very grave letter, indeed."

A Puzzling Pair

Mrs. Forrester was gravity itself, as she took the letter from Berry's hesitating fingers. She read it through, then replaced it in the envelope without a word.

"And do you want me to stamp it and send it?" she asked after a pause, looking at Berry very tenderly.

"Yes, please; do you think it's a nice letter? Guy says if he writes them letters now and then till he grows up, perhaps that will do instead of going out to them, and then when he gets money for his pictures, he'll send them some money."

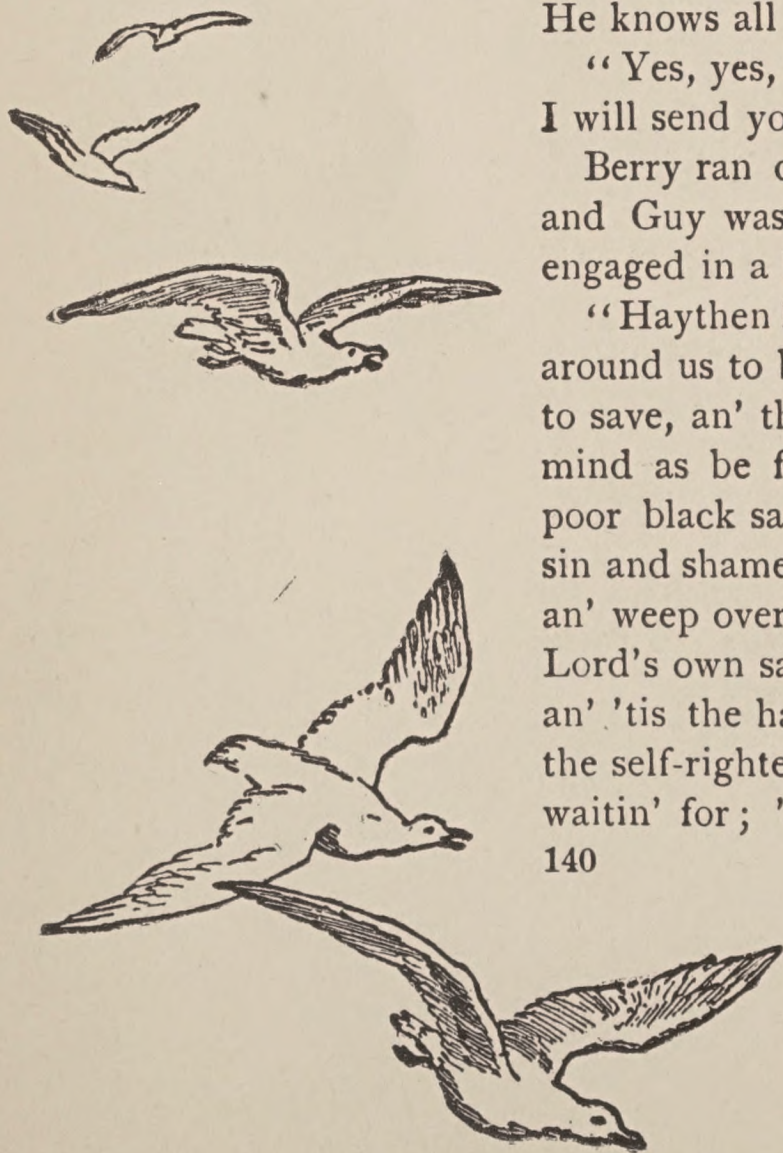
"Guy mustn't get too good to live," said Mrs. Forrester, trying to speak lightly. "What children you are for getting ideas into your brain! When I first came it was all the Second Coming with you; now it is the heathen. What will it be next?"

"You don't understand," said Berry, a little indignantly; "it's all the same thing! Both Guy and me want Jesus to come as quick as ever He can, and so we're helping Him to come by writing to the heathen. Guy can explain it to you. He knows all about it."

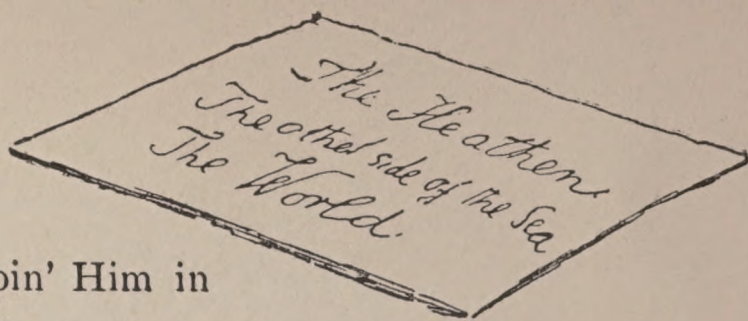
"Yes, yes, dear, I think I do understand. Now run away, I will send your letter, but I must finish my own first!"

Berry ran off to the kitchen, for tea was beginning there, and Guy was already seated at the table. She found him engaged in a heated argument with Thomas.

"Haythen!" the old man was saying, "us have haythen all around us to be sure! 'Tis the haythen to home us must try to save, an' there be many a rich churchgoin' haythen to my mind as be far more likely to be judged severely than they poor black savages! Na, na, 'tis easy to shut ye eyes to the sin and shamefer wickedness of our nation, an' shake ye heads an' weep over the iniquities o' they across the seas! 'Tis the Lord's own sayin'—'The first shall be last, an' the last first,' an' 'tis the haythen shall be entertained in the kingdom, an' the self-righteous cast out! 'Tis not the haythen the Lord be waitin' for; 'tis the likes o' we, and many's the one but a



Two Letters



stone's-throw from this here house that be keepin' Him in His love awaitin' an' alongin' for them!"

"Mr. Curate said it was the heathen," said Guy, hot and flushed. "He said Jesus told His disciples to go and preach to all the world, and no one has done it yet!"

"Yes, and if we like to tell the heathen about Jesus, you are not to stop us, Thomas," put in Berry, rushing into the discussion with all her usual impetuosity. "You don't want Jesus to come so soon as we do, or you would be glad for the poor heathen to be told about Him!"

"Hush ye now," Matty said, soothingly, "don't ye be so saucy; 'tis a good little maid you've bin latterly, an' if so be as ye weren't so free wi' ye tongue"—

"Has the letter gone?" interrupted Guy, eagerly.

"It's going, and motherkin thinks it very nice indeed."

The conversation drifted into safer channels, and knowing that Thomas was not in full sympathy with their schemes for benefiting the heathen, Guy and Berry forbore to talk about it in his presence any more.

"What are you so intent upon?" asked Mr. Forrester, coming into his wife's room just before post time, and finding her, with her head resting on her hand, gazing down at letters on her knee.

She looked up, and her eyes were full of tears, though she tried to laugh away her emotion.

"Warwick, come here. Sometimes I think it is the grown-up people who play with life, and the children who grasp its awful seriousness. Read this letter from Miss Marchmount, which I received this morning, and then I have another I should like to show you."

Mr. Forrester threw himself into an easy-chair with the remark, "I am thankful my lot in life has not been cast with that good lady's. Her tongue is that of a shrew's!"

And then he read as follows,—

A Puzzling Pair

“DEAR MRS. FORRESTER,—

“Accept my thanks for giving us the details of the disaster that has so lately befallen you. Seeing an exaggerated account of it in one of the papers made us fear for the safety of our little friends. I trust that nothing will induce either you or your good husband to delay any longer repairing the structure of your tottering abode. It is tempting Providence to live in such a habitation. My kind love to the little ones. Their visit was a profitable one to both my brother and myself. It is well to come in contact in these days of doubt and infidelity with the strong and steadfast faith of childhood. They live so near to the throne of the Eternal One that they draw those with whom they live to do the same, or, at all events, to try to attain to their position. I sincerely hope that the broken arm will heal quickly. Kindly send me a line later to report its progress.

“With kind regards,

“Yours sincerely,

“ALICIA MARCHMOUNT.”

“And now this,” said Mrs. Forrester, as her husband handed the letter back to her, with a smile and a sigh.

“OUR DEAR HEATHEN,—

“This is from Berry and me because Berry is quite ready now for Jesus coming again, and we want Him to come quick. Have you heard about Him? He wants people who know about Him to go and tell you, but we can't go yet. He lives in heaven, and He came down and died to save you and let you go to heaven too when you die. You had better ask Him to forgive you your sins and make you good. And don't eat each other up any more like Thomas says you do. You had better say your prayers to God every day, and burn those idle dolls that Thomas says you have, in the fire. Please be quick and get ready for Jesus, for we feel He is waiting for you, and then He will come with a big trumpet in the sky with all the



Two Letters

angels and good people that have died, and we shall fly up in the air to meet Him. Berry says she thinks you won't stay black heathen any more if you get good, because God makes our black hearts white and He will make you white too. We send our love.

"GUY AND BERRY."

Mr. Forrester looked at his wife, as he laid this letter down, with a curious smile.

"It shows a strange ignorance, doesn't it? Their missionary knowledge is nil, whatever their spiritual knowledge may be. And their father has not helped them. Their religion is real to them at all events."

"Yes," his wife responded, with deep feeling; "and if strangers like Miss Marchmount are the better for their influence, surely those who live with them and see them day by day ought to catch a little of their enthusiasm for the truths that we all profess to believe! I tell you, Warwick, they shame me day by day. They make me realize what an empty life mine is in comparison with theirs."

"And these my little scamps and imps of mischief!" murmured Mr. Forrester, rising from his seat; "well, I always felt they were enigmas to me, but clip their wings if you see them sprouting, my dear, we can't spare them yet for heaven."

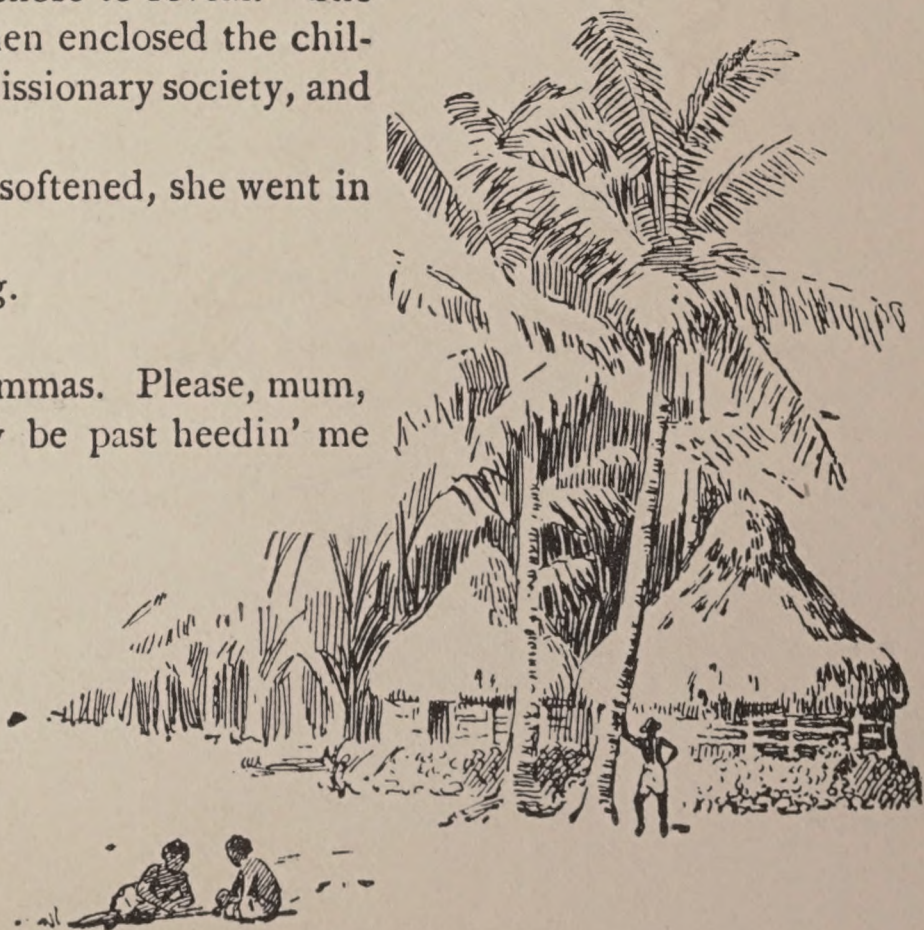
He left the room, but in spite of his half-jesting words his wife knew he was more moved than he chose to reveal. She sat on in deep thought for a time, then enclosed the children's letter with one of her own to a missionary society, and sent off the letter to the post.

And then with her heart touched and softened, she went in search of the little ones.

She did not find their wings sprouting.

Matty met her at the kitchen door.

"They chillen will be the death o' Tummas. Please, mum, do ye go out an' call they in, for they be past heedin' me entirely!"



A Puzzling Pair

A moment after, and, with shrieks of laughter, the twins tore in, Berry arrayed in all the dishcloths and dusters that Matty possessed, a kitchen tablecloth trailing behind her on the ground from her waist, and a saucepan on her head; Guy in one of Thomas' best coats, an old tin pail nearly extinguishing his curly head, and Thomas' thick walking stick in hand.

"Oh, motherkin, such fun! We went out to see Taffy-raggy! It doesn't matter about your knowing about him now, because he doesn't live with us any longer. When his room tumbled down, he went to a cave high up in the cliffs, and Thomas ran after us—he said we were a disgrace to the house to go along the beach dressed up like this—but he can't catch us, and we've been running all over the place, and now we've locked him up in the stable, and he's kicking and thumping like anything!"

"Ye young scamps!" exclaimed Matty, as she dashed out of the room to liberate her spouse.

Mrs. Forrester shook her head gravely at them.

"That is not behaving well to Thomas. Take off those wonderful garments, tell Thomas you are sorry when he comes in, and then come to me in my room till dinner-time."

It said much for Mrs. Forrester's training that the twins instantly obeyed her.

But, going back to her cheerful fire, she said to herself, with a smile and another shake of her head,—

"Thank God they are not too good to live."



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A PUZZLING



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